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African Violet MAGAZINE

May • June 2005 Volume 58 Number 3

AVSA Information

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AVSA OFFICE: Jenny Daugereau, Office Manager, 2375 North Street, Beaumont, TX 77702, 1-800-770-AVSA; 409-839-4725; FAX 409-839-4329. Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. CST. *E-mail* avsa@earthlink.net.

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ARTICLES BY MEMBERS, COLUMNISTS AND MEMORIALS: Send to Editor.

Please Note: Deadlines - Articles and Columnists: Jan. issue - Oct. 1; Mar. issue - Dec. 1; May issue - Feb. 1; July issue - Apr 1; Sept. issue - June 1; Nov. issue - Aug. 1.

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QUESTION BOX: Ralph Robinson, P. O. Box 9, Naples, NY 14512. *E-mail* robsviolet@aol.com and Sue Haffner, 3015 Timmy Ave, Clovis, CA 93612-4849. *E-mail* sueh@csufresno.edu

MASTER VARIETY LIST:

MVL SUPPLEMENTS: will be published in the AVM. Send any correction and/or description of new cultivars with hybridizer's name to Joe Bruns, 1220 Stratford Lane, Hanover Park, IL 60130.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS: Sent to Associate Members and New Members only. Renewing members receive card on white protective cover of AVM.

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QUESTIONS ON HYBRIDIZING: Dr. Jeff Smith, "In Search of New Violets" The Indiana Academy, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306. Web site: avsa.org

RESEARCH: Send suggested projects for scientific research or names of interested, qualified, potential research personnel to Dr. Jeff Smith, 3014 W. Amherst Rd., Muncie, IN 47304.

SHOW ENTRY TAGS: 100 - $8.00 postpaid. Order from AVSA Office.

SHOW SCHEDULE APPROVER: For information on Shows, AVSA Awards and Approving Schedules write to: Meredith Hall, P. O. Box 370, Marlin, TX 76661. *E-mail* MHALL@worldissue.com. **Do not send Show Schedules by E-mail - this address is for information ONLY.**

TALLY TIME: Heather Menzel, 135 N. Main St., Yardley, PA 19067. *E-mail* hmenzel@erols.com

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$49 - 2 Years $73 - 3 Years

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Best Standard with Multicolor Variegated Foliage
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Hybridized by:
Sorano/L. Lyon Greenhouses

Photo Credit: Winston J. Goretsky

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The African Violet Society of America, Inc. — Org. 1946

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Every attempt is made to keep articles technically correct. Since the growing of fine African violets can be achieved in many ways, the methods and opinions expressed by writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of AVSA.

President's Message

Dear AVSA Members,

Spring is here, finally! It seemed to take forever here in the northeast. Cold weather held on well into March with more snow than the past few years. Now we can enjoy spring and the many violet shows around the country. If your affiliate has already held their show, I hope it was successful with beautiful exhibits and many visitors. If it is still to come, good luck. Don't forget to have AVSA culture brochures to give to the public, to inform them and help them to grow and enjoy the plants they purchased at your plant sale table.

In this issue of the *African Violet Magazine*, Georgene Albrecht has written an article that you should read. It concerns a problem with a virus that can infect African violets as well as many other kinds of plants. AVSA members in several parts of the country have encountered this disease, and we all need to be alert to it and take steps to prevent its spread. It is called INSV, short for impatiens necrotic spot virus, and is vectored, or carried, by thrips. If we can eliminate thrips from our collections, we can halt the spread of this disease. AVSA is taking steps to initiate research into INSV and its relationship to African violets. This will help to provide understanding and eventually, control.

The Executive Committee, with the help of a lawyer in our midst, Andrea Worrell, and with the advice of our accountant, has been working on a proposal for the Board of Directors to consider regarding the establishment of an endowment program for AVSA. When the details have been resolved, there will be a procedure for members to follow if they wish to make a bequest to AVSA in their will. An endowment program will provide financial stability and enable the Society to provide greater benefits to all members.

As AVSA had an election at the annual membership meeting in Cincinnati and my term as president has been completed, this is my last message to you. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank some of the many people who have helped me during my term as AVSA president.

- The Executive Committee –provided advice and assistance frequently. Thank goodness for email. I greatly appreciate the support.
- The Office Staff –alerted me to problems and provided information whenever I asked. Thanks so much, Jenny, Ruth, and Mandy.
- All the Standing and Special Committee Chairs –carried on the myriad functions of our organization. It takes many workers to keep things running smoothly.
- The Board of Directors –made decisions that have aided the Society in meeting the needs of our members.
- Pauline Bartholomew –transferred the rights for 'Growing to Show' to AVSA.
- All AVSA members –started to make AVSA better. Let's keep it up. Thank you for the pleasure of serving you.

Janet

Janet Riemer
President, AVSA

Editor's Notes

Ruth Rumsey
AVM Editor
2375 North Street
Beaumont, TX 77702
Email: rrumsey@earthlink.net

Another convention has come and gone. The July/August AVM will be the convention issue, with the Best in Show winner featured on the cover and all of the show results and awards inside.

The 2005 Vacation Guide appears on pages 16 and 17 of this issue. **David Buttram** compiles this handy guide for us each spring. If your summer travel plans take you close to any of the AVSA Commercial Members listed here, be sure to visit them.

If you are planning to visit Texas please stop by the AVSA office. Spring is here in full force. In Beaumont, and many other areas of this state, azalea and lilies are in bloom. In the Texas hill country, the highways wind through miles and miles of beautiful blue bonnets and red and yellow Indian Blankets. If your travels bring you close to the office, give us a call for directions; we're just a few minutes from the interstate.

Georgene Albrecht, much-loved author of our 'A Family Portrait' column, has written a very timely article for this issue. On page 40 you'll find color photographs of African violet plants that are infected with Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus - INSV. These plants were tested for the virus and the results were positive. Georgene's article, page 41, describes the virus and tells about testing plants for the disease.

As the culprit spreading this virus is thrips, all growers should take precautions to prevent thrips from invading their violet collections. Above all, ISOLATE each and every new acquisition. There are very effective products on the market now to eradicate thrips.

INSV is not a new virus, having been around a long time. In hopes of learning more about INSV and other viruses that threaten the African violet, our AVSA Research Committee is actively seeking interested researchers.

Also, in this issue, our 'Small Talk' columnist, **Laurel Goretsky**, addresses 'repotting' and 'potting up'. Photographs that you'll find helpful accompany the column.

It's been nice to receive original articles by some of our members. I hope more of you will give it a shot. If you don't feel that you are a writer, don't worry, I'll edit for you.

Thank you to my "consultants", **Iris Keating, Cheryl Salatino**, and **Bob Clark**. I have never claimed to be an African violet expert, although I do read an awful lot of information about these plants. When in doubt, I often turn to Iris, Cheryl, and Bob for their thoughts.

Our Awards Committee Chairman, **Sue Hoffmann**, has a new email address. Write to Sue at: avsaawards@cox.net.

PLEASE make note of the Coming Event Deadlines. They are printed on the inside front cover of every issue of this magazine, and often again inside.

Also, please remember that EVERY Library Reservation MUST be made in writing. Please do not call the office to reserve a slide show or video program. Please send all reservations to the AVSA office either by email, fax, or postal service. List three preferences. We do our best to get the program you request to you in a timely manner, but still ask that you allow six weeks for delivery.

Make note of our columnists' mailing and email addresses. If you have a topic you would like to see covered, or a question that you need answered, please let them know.

Registration Report

Janice Bruns
1220 Stratford Lane
Hanover Park, IL 60133
Email: janice@qwip.net

A name reservation costs $1.00 and is valid for two years, after which time it may be extended two years for an additional $1.00. Registration of the plant is $5.00 unless completed within the reservation period, in which case the balance is then $4.00. Please make check payable to AVSA.

David Thompson – Waterloo, IA

***Blue Chiffon** (9402) 12/29/04 (D. Thompson) Semidouble-double medium blue star. Medium green, plain, quilted. **Standard**

***Fantasy Ribbons** (9403) 12/29/04 (D. Thompson) Single chimera light pink sticktite star/purple fantasy stripe. **Variegated** medium green, pink, and cream. **Standard**

NAME RESERVATIONS

Ruby Cox – Bethany, MO

* Flirty Girl * Bethany Belle * Sweet Bailey * Casino Queen * Purple Tornado * Foggy Morn * Missouri Whing Ding * That Zane Lady *

REGISTRATION CHANGE

The following foliage description has been changed at the request of the hybridizer:

Von's Moon Shadows (6924) **Variegated** medium green and white, plain. (Change underlined.)

The Benefits of NEEM oil for Violets

by Margaret Ledford

My plants were so sad, and they looked so pitiful. I was trying to figure out what to do to make them happy again. They really suffered last year during late summer and early fall. Many had stopped blooming; others developed tight centers or discolored center leaves. There were no signs of insects that I could see. But then, insects are not always visible to the naked eye, as we all know.

I remembered reading an article on NEEM oil, but the writer had not actually used it on her own plants.

Upon doing research, I found that NEEM oil is a natural product that is pressed from the seeds of the Name tree. This tree, native to eastern India, has a 4,000 year history as a medicinal herb. It is non-toxic to humans, but is an effective insecticide, miticide, and fungicide for plants. It also works great for powdery mildew, and there is minimal damage to open blossoms.

The naturally occurring compounds in Neem oil discourage feeding on treated plants. When ingested, Neem disrupts the molting and reproductive cycles of many insects. Neem has proven remarkably non-toxic to birds, mammals, and beneficial predators like ladybugs, for instance.

The only NEEM product that I found locally was 70% Neem oil and 30% additives. I didn't want to take a chance on the "additives". Mr. Cook of Cape Cod Violetry lists 100% Neem oil in his AV magazine ad. I ordered the NEEM oil from him and began to treat my plants with it.

Directions for use are to mix four teaspoons of pure NEEM oil to one gallon of warm water, plus one teaspoon of liquid dish soap. The liquid dish soap acts as an emulsifier to aid in mixing the oil and water. Shake well. This can be watered in or as a foliar spray directly to the leaves.

I plucked out the damaged or discolored center leaves and began treating my plants. I continued to treat them once a week over a four-week period. The color of the leaves began to improve, and they became stronger.

As a result of removing the center leaves, suckers appeared on many of the plants. I recently repotted all of my plants, getting ready for our club's annual plant sale. As I repotted, I removed the little suckers and potted them in 2 ounce plastic Solo cups. These were moistened with a solution of one teaspoon of Allegro to a gallon of warm water, and then placed on a tray with a clear plastic dome cover.

Now I have over two hundred new babies to care for. When they outgrow the Solo cups, I will pot them up into 3 inch pots. I plan to treat them with NEEM oil, about once a month, on a regular basis.

I love watching them grow from tiny starters to healthy mature plants. Hopefully, they will be covered in beautiful blossoms.

Small Talk

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As a beginning grower, I had trouble understanding the difference between "repotting" and "potting up". To "repot" means to remove a plant from one pot and place it in a new pot of the same size. If I am growing a miniature in a 2 1/4 inch pot, I will "repot" it into a new 2 1/4 inch pot. To "pot up" is to remove a plant from one pot and place it in a new pot of a larger size. If I am growing in a 2 1/4 inch pot, I will "pot up" into a 2 1/2 inch or a larger size pot. The terms "over-potted" and "under-potted" also caused me uncertainty. A plant that is "over potted" is too small for the size of pot you are using, and a plant that is "under potted" is too big for the size of pot that it is in. A general suggestion is that the spread of the plant should be 3 times the width of the pot (referenced from the *AVSA Handbook for Growers, Exhibitors and Judges*).

How do you know when it is time to repot, pot up, or move your miniatures or semiminiatures out of the pot they are in and into something else? This question has more answers than you might imagine.

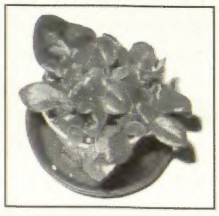

Figure 1

Let's look at potting up plantlets that have developed from a leaf in a leaf tray or pot (figure 1). Remove the plantlets and leaf from the pot and place on a piece of newspaper or paper for easy clean up (figure 1a). Carefully, divide the plantlets and examine each one. Remove any damaged leaves until they have a nicely shaped, healthy looking crown (figure 1b). Prepare the pot that you are going to be placing the plantlet into by adding the soil and making a hole in the center with a pencil (figure 1c). I would probably choose a 2 1/4 inch pot at this stage unless I was potting up a trailer. Also, if I were wicking my plant, I would add the wick before the soil and I would use a lighter soil mixture. Lightly dust the bottom of the crown with a rooting hormone and place it in the prepared pot. Make sure that the plant is centered and secure in the pot, and then using a soft brush, remove dust from leaves and pot. Label the pot with the correct name and any other information you want to include, such as the name of the hybridizer or the date that you potted the plant. Place a saucer underneath the pot and give the plant some water (figure 1d).

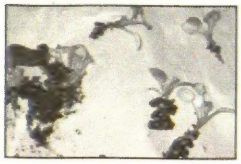

Figure 1a

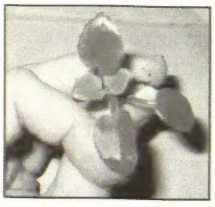

Figure 1b

Figure 1c

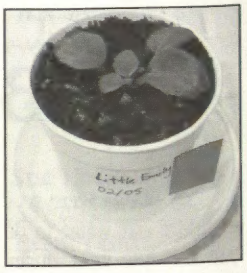

Figure 1d

When we have a show and sale, one of the most commonly asked questions that we hear from people is, "What do I do with my violet when it has a long neck showing?" The answer is, of course, to repot it. This is often referred to as "potting down" a neck. After removing small, old, or damaged bottom leaves, your plant might have an exposed neck (figure 2). Most often with my miniatures and semiminiatures, I would repot them at this point rather than potting up. It depends on what size pot the plant is growing in. The example I am sharing is 'Rob's Love Bite'. It is a miniature in a 2 1/4 inch pot. I will be repotting it into a new 2 1/4 inch pot. If you are feeling worried about hurting your

Figure 2

original plant, don't be. It's a good idea, however, to put down a leaf of any variety that you want to preserve in your collection. The first step in repotting a plant with a neck is to gently scrape off

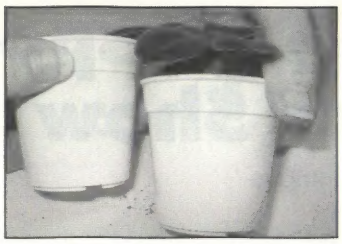

Figure 2a

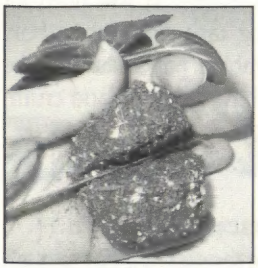

Figure 2b

any leaf stubs or crust that has formed (figure 2). Next, measure the plant against the new pot to see how much of the root ball will need to be removed in order for the plant leaves to be level against the edge of the new pot (figure 2a). Place a small amount of soil into the bottom of the pot and remove the plant from the old one. Cut the soil ball off where you measured and place the plant in the new pot (figure 2b). Fill soil in around neck up to the leaves (figure 2c). Finish off by removing any soil from leaves and pot, labeling the pot, and giving it a drink of water (refer to the first example and figure 1d).

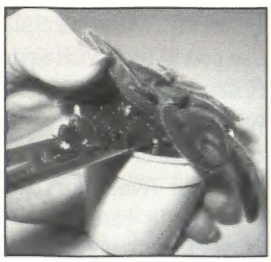

Figure 2c

Potting up is also required when you have a plant that is under potted (figure 3). One way to pot up is by mold potting. I don't often use this method, but it is a useful one, especially if you are hesitant about disturbing the root ball of your plant. Mold potting is a good method to use if you want to keep the root ball intact and prevent the plant from experiencing as much shock. With that in mind, this example will show potting up a semiminiature trailer, 'Rob's Humpty Doo', from a 2 1/4 inch pot to a 5 inch bulb pan, using mold potting. Start by removing any blossoms and dead or damaged leaves. Remove the blossoms even if they are not spent so that all the plant's energy can go into growing the leaves for a while. The next step is to take two clean pots, one the same size in which your plant is currently growing, and the other the size into which you are potting up (figure 3a). You then prepare your pot by placing the smaller one into the center of the larger one and fill the soil in around the smaller pot creating a mold (figure 3b). Remove the smaller pot from the mold and remove your plant from the old pot and place it into the space you have created (figure 3c). Fill in any spots that need more soil and brush off any dirt from leaves and pot. Don't forget to label the pot with the plant's name and to give it a drink (figure 1d).

Figure 3

Figure 3a

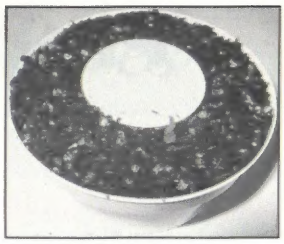

Figure 3b

Figure 3c

I hope that this will give you a good start for repotting your miniatures and semiminiatures. My suggestions are just that, suggestions. An excellent resource for any grower is "Growing to Show" by Pauline Bartholomew. You can purchase this book through the AVSA website or by sending in the form on the back of the *African Violet Magazine*. This book covers everything from supplies and tools used for growing violets, to common pests. One method of potting violets that is referred to in the book is called "Texas-style" potting. Briefly, "Texas-style" potting is where you make a row of holes approximately 1/4 of the way up from the bottom of the pot and fill in a shallow layer of perlite and then a layer of soil. Because I haven't tried this method, I am unable to illustrate it. Those I have spoken with about this method have had wonderful results. It sounds like a good method to try!

While I was writing this column, I was reminded how when I was a novice grower, repotting was the part of caring for my violets that made me the most nervous. I was lucky because I had an experienced grower living with me! Any time that I had any questions about caring for my plants, my husband was usually on hand to help me. He would often stand beside me and talk me through certain steps as I was fixing and repotting the plants that needed it. After lots of practice and many mistakes along the way, I gained confidence in this area and have graduated to working on my plants alone. I do still ask for advice sometimes, though! If you don't have a "violet" expert in your house like I do, don't hesitate to ask someone from your local club or make a suggestion that a "beginners" workshop be held for a half an hour or so before or after your regular meeting. If you are unable to attend local meetings or if you don't have a club in your area, find what you can to read on growing violets and enjoy experimenting on your own.

A large part of growing miniature and semi miniature African violets is trial and error. Success comes from finding the methods that work best for you. Keep trying, remain positive and you will succeed.

Preparing and Transporting Violets for Show

by Marie Montague

It's a week before show and your plants are really looking good. You think you are all set, but this is sometimes when the hard work begins.

Preparation – Week before Show

Read the show schedule until you have down pat what is required in each Class and the Rules for Registration. (*Growing to Show* by Pauline Bartholomew and the *Growers and Judges Handbook* are excellent resources.)

Write down all the names of the plants you plan to show including registration #'s if listed. If you are sure, enter Class #. Place your plant away from others and match up with the description in *MVL*. Is your plant correctly named? Look at the plant to make sure it's clean and there are no suckers, spent blossoms, or pedioles to be removed. Check for symmetry (*AVM* article of March-April 2003 entitled *"Judging the Show Plant"* is the best guide I know of). Don't remove outer leaves now. One marred leaf is not significant when judged, but symmetry is. If you are entering a trailer, are there three crowns and sufficient bloom over total plant? Make sure that semi-miniatures are less than 8" across, that miniatures are less than 6" across, and that none of your plants are over-potted.

Take another look at the plant to determine what size transport container you will need. The night before is not the time to be looking for a box – it's no fun.

Transport Containers

1) Plan a separate box with cover for each large standard. Cut a hole in the center of a soda or beer tray large enough to hold a 4" pot and anchor the tray in box with masking tape. Write the name of the plant on the box. This method has been used for small plants, but I find them difficult to remove. I prefer #2 below for small plants and trailers.

2) Take a full length of newspaper print and start at one end and twist around to the end. Circle around so it looks like a "donut" and determine how large a hole you will need for your pot. Hold together with masking tape and put in box. Place plant in "donut" and use crumbled paper around the edges to hold in place. Keep leaves above "donut" and crumbled paper. You will find that you can fit several minis and semi-miniatures in one box (don't let leaves touch.)

Day Before Entering (or maybe that morning)

Make sure there is sufficient bloom for size of plant to qualify for a blue ribbon. If not, remove outer leaves and cover neck. Check now and remove marred leaves if this won't ruin symmetry. Make sure plants are moist and wicks don't show. Use pen to tuck wick up in drainage hole. Check again for spent blossoms and petioles and dust plant with grooming brush. Put your name on the bottom of the pot with masking tape or address label (must do.)

Is an AVSA collection in your future? Bring your AVSA membership card with you. Club members are always helpful in checking your plants to see if you might have missed the opportunity to enter a collection.

What To Take To Show

Bring your list and your favorite grooming tools to the show (dusting brush, small scissors, tweezers, etc.) and your Sharpie permanent marker (place your address label on the marker so it will go home with you). Don't forget masking tape or address labels – they sometimes fall off in transit.

There is only one thing left to do: try to relax and remember that those entering your plants are trying to be helpful. They will refuse plants for show that have pests, powdery mildew, generally don't look healthy, are not named, or incorrectly named. Have patience, it's their job. Good Luck!!

Coming Events Deadlines

January/February AVM - November 1
March/April AVM - January 1
May/June AVM - March 1
July/August AVM - May 1
September/October AVM - July 1
November/December AVM - September 1

All events notices must be in writing.
Submit by Email <rrumsey@earthlink.net>.
Fax: 409.839.4329 or US Postal Service: AVSA Coming Events
2375 North St., Beaumont, TX 77702

AVSA Affiliates

Bev Promersberger
Affiliate Committee
7992 Otis Way, Pensacola, FL 32506
Email: Promers22@hotmail.com

Do You Need Money?

This column is continued from the 'Affiliate' column in the January, 2005 issue. It is based on information shared at the 'Affiliate Meeting' held at the AVSA convention in Tucson, April 2004. The January column shared ideas of increasing the treasury at shows and sales. This column is devoted to increasing the treasury from projects during local club meetings.

"We love an auction!!!" Silent auctions often add interest as well as revenue at local club meetings. Auctions are sometimes held once a year or at specific meetings like Christmas. Sometimes they are held at the first meeting after the AVSA convention with items brought back from convention. Items often included are: rare plant cuttings, wall hangings, greeting cards, grooming kits, books, bubble bowls, dinners for 2, and violet and/or gesneriad seeds. Sometimes, the auctions are fully auctioneered and create a real bidding fervor among the members. Some auctions contain items that are concealed in what is referred to as a 'Mystery Box", a box with little or no indication as to what is inside. Sometimes, auctions consist of "white elephant" items.

Raffles are popular at meetings as well as at shows and/or sales. There is variation at the meetings as well. Raffle items include: starter plants, plant-related items, wrapped surprise gifts, and "white elephant" items. Sometimes members are assigned to take turns bringing in the items; sometimes any member can bring items at any time. Ticket prices vary from $1 for 3 tickets or 25 to 50 cents each. Some clubs reward anyone who brings in an item with an extra ticket. Note: the more members who bring in valued items, the better chance of getting something special because not everyone is seeking the same item.

Plants, cuttings, and/or leaves are often sold or donated by members at the meetings. Sometimes the proceeds are donated entirely to the club, and sometimes members are allowed to retain a percentage of the cost. Some clubs allow sales before each meeting which encourage members to be on time, if not early. Donated plants are sometimes used as welcome gifts for visitors. Sometimes members are encouraged to donate items that pertain to the program, trailer cuttings for a program on trailers, miniature leaves or starters for a program on miniatures and semiminiatures, or leaves or starters of favorite red blossom plants in February to celebrate Valentine's Day. There is nothing nicer than to attend a program and be able to take home a plant that the program pertains to.

The roll call is used by some clubs to create interest as well as revenue. Instead of answering, "here" or "yea", some clubs ask their members to share a violet blossom or pay 10 cents to the treasury. It may not seem very much, but it all adds up.

Bingo, more specifically "Violet" or leaf bingo, is fun at a Christmas party or special meeting. The pennies that cover the called numbers are dumped into a container and added to the treasury at the end of the meeting. Members bring in leaves or starter plants for the prizes.

Many clubs sell supplies at club meetings. When supplies are ordered in bulk, clubs usually get a better price. The savings is an advantage for both the club and the member. After adding the shipping and handling charges to the cost of the items, clubs can give the club members a discount and still add to their treasury. Just 10% over cost can increase the treasury rapidly if enough items are available. Of course, someone needs to be responsible for storing and transporting the items. How about dividing the job among two or more members? How about giving a list to the members so that they can call in advance to request certain items be brought to the meeting?

Sometimes programs can be combined with making money. Many clubs have demonstrations or workshops on mixing soil. The club members are allowed to purchase the bags for their own use. The remaining bags are used to sell to the public during the shows and/or sales. Programs on supplies and how they are used would also be an encouragement for members to purchase. The experienced growers can share in the demonstrations, and the visitors and new members can learn.

There are usually many opportunities for clubs to participate in activities outside shows and club meetings. State Fair Horticultural Exhibits, County and/or University Botanical Garden weekends, weekend fall festivals, Horticulture Center opportunities, craft fairs are some. How about a garage or yard sale? Many clubs have found these very profitable.

In Search of New Violets

Dr. Jeff Smith
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Every once in a while when you work in science, an idea that you haven't been able to test yourself is supported by the work of others. I have argued for several years that the *Saintpaulia* species plants must have more variation between individuals than is evident in our collections. Plants from the recent Mather and Uppsala collections have shown some of these variations, but I've always wondered what happens with the plants growing in the wild. Recently, I received a communication from Johanna Kolehmainen from Finland who has been heading some work on the species in Tanzania. Johanna's project was partially supported by a grant from the Boyce Edens Research Fund, and her report was an update on the project to the AVSA Board of Directors. In the report, Johanna shows pictures of several populations of African violet species where individuals who grow side by side have strong variations in their leaf shape, may have red or green backing on the leaves, or show other changes in other characteristics. The report also shows a picture of a possible natural hybrid between the rosette species *S. confusa* and the trailing species *S. grotei.* The pictures are the first good documentation I've seen on the extent of variation between individual plants within a population. If you consider that several species of African violets were described to science based on a single plant, you start to get some perspective on the significance of the pictures. Fortunately, the descriptions of the species in the Master Variety List have been broadened in recent years and may accommodate some of these new variations. This information only heightens the need to protect and conserve the wild plants. It is likely that our collections only contain a fraction of the true genetic variation and potential available for our favorite plants.

Q: *You have written about how to breed the thumbprint pattern on different kinds of foliage or flower combinations. Do you think it's possible to get a thumbprint flower in yellow?*

A: It should be possible. I would suggest crossing a good thumbprint pattern plant with the best yellow you can find. The F1 offspring will probably be about 50% thumbprint flowers and 50% non-thumbprint flowers. The color of the F1 offspring will likely be the color of the thumbprint parent. Take a strong F1 plant with the thumbprint pattern and backcross to the yellow parent. This should conserve the thumbprint pattern in about 50% of the offspring. The flower colors will probably be a range from white to yellow to the color of the F1 flower. You should have about a 25% chance of getting a yellow thumbprint flower so be sure you grow out a high number of seeds.

The thumbprint pattern may be hard to see because of the way many yellow flowers shade to white on the edges of the petals, and the yellow color is often not intense. I've also observed that some of the yellows don't show the color well until the plant is more mature so don't be hasty in throwing out the seedlings at their first bloom. You may need to self-pollinate your best yellow thumbprint plant in order to reinforce the yellow color for better contrast between the white and yellow areas. Good luck!

Q: *How is the length of the bloom stalk inherited?*

A: I've seen some results which suggest that long bloom stalks are dominant to short stalks. However, I suspect that this is an over simplification of the genetics. To keep things simple, your best bet is to choose parents that already have bloom stalks of your target length. Since like crossed with like usually

gives offspring with the same trait as the parents, most of the offspring should show a similar length in bloom stalk. If you want offspring with shorter bloom stalks, avoid using a parent with long stalks.

Q: *Some of the other members of the African violet family have foliage with pungent scents. Would it be possible to breed for scented foliage in African violets?*

A: This is an interesting idea, but I'm not sure how possible it will be to accomplish. The best way to get scented foliage would be to use a parent that already has the trait. As far as I know, African violets will not cross with other members of the gesneriad family so this is going to be very difficult. Perhaps the genes for scented foliage can one day be transferred into violets through DNA technology. Can you imagine a pink and white flowered plant with peppermint scented foliage? That would certainly be an interesting plant for your collection.

Q: *I've noticed that the pollen sacs or anthers in African violets are always yellow. Can they come in any other color?*

A: The pollen sacs of African violets are yellow because pollen is the reward offered to pollinators to come visit the flower. The contrast between the yellow anthers and the blue petals in the species plants is highly visible to potential pollinators. Evolution would not have favored plants with other anther colors as they would be unable to attract pollinators and reproduce. Therefore, the trait for yellow anthers has been highly reinforced over evolutionary time and is unlikely to change.

About the closest I've seen to another color besides yellow is in some of the white flowered cultivars such as 'Frosted Whisper'. Some of these have very pale yellow, almost white pollen sacs. The pollen sac cells certainly contain the same DNA as the petal cells, but we would have to find a way to turn those genes on in preference to the usual yellow pigment genes. Right now, I don't know of a way to do this.

The idea of turning the pollen sacs another color would certainly give some interesting flowers. Star shaped blooms have the best presentation of pollen sacs. Can you imagine a blue star with pink anthers? Or a pink star with blue anthers? If we could figure out how to colorize the anthers, it certainly would open a whole new type of flowers for African violets.

Q: *Is the amount of ruffles in girl foliage determined by the genes or the growing conditions? I've seen reports that the leaves change under different types of light*

A: The physical presentation of many traits in plants is actually a combination of their genes and the growing environment. Girl foliage is a good case in point. The gene for girl foliage appears to control a "stop" signal (similar to the brakes in a car) for the cells on the edge of the leaves. When the gene is present, the signal is not given and the cells divide more than they should. The extra amount of cells produces the ruffles characteristic of girl foliage. The environment, especially light intensity, can change the activity level of the gene. In high light, the gene is more active and the amount of ruffling increases to the point that the leaves don't expand properly and you get tight centers. In low light, the gene is less active and the foliage tends to grow with fewer ruffles, more flat and with open spacing between the leaves. If your girl foliage plants are producing centers that are too tight, try moving the plant to a lower light intensity. You can't change the genes, but you can change the way the gene interacts with the environment.

Q: *Are all plants with variegation on the edges of the leaves descendents from 'Tommie Lou', the first plant with the trait?*

A: The 'Tommie Lou' style of variegation is inherited only through the seed parent in what is called maternal inheritance. Theoretically, all of today's cultivars with this trait can be traced back through their seed parent to 'Tommie Lou', and I suspect this is true in many cases. However, some traits in African violets have originated more than once so it is possible that some plants wouldn't follow this pattern. The trick would be in following the amount of variegation in the leaf.

It is also possible for a plant to have the trait, but not have enough of the abnormal chloroplasts to give visible variegation. The number of abnormal chloroplasts can be increased by chance when the egg cells are formed, and the resulting offspring will now show the variegation. This result would suggest that a variegated plant originated from a non-variegated seed parent although this wasn't really the case.

A "Basket"

by Elmer Godeny

From AVSA's Web Site Frequently Asked Questions

A "basket" is the beginning of a new plant on a peduncle (blossom stem). "Baskets" can be propagated to produce new plants. In fact, all plants derived from baskets should be true. If you want to start a new plant from the basket, wait until the leaves get about the size of a dime. Then you can break off the basket and remove any old blossom stem. Propagating a basket is similar to propagating a sucker. Scrape the outer surface off of the bottom of the basket where you expect the roots to develop. Place the basket in soil in a humidified environment and wait for it to root. I use plastic "To-Go" containers with the snap lids. I place my African violet soilless mix in the bottom of the container and layer it with vermiculite. Add enough water to dampen the mix but don't drench. Place the basket in the mix and wait. You may need to use toothpicks to keep it upright. Once roots develop on the basket, it will begin to grow and get bigger.

For Beginners

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It All Starts At The Beginning!

By the time this column gets to print, the AVSA National Convention in Cincinnati will be a fond memory for most of us. I am sure that I will have had a great time meeting with friends, catching up on news, and discussing our favorite topics: African violets and gesneriads. I will be going away from the convention reminded of how beautifully these house plants can be grown. I am sure that I will have made numerous trips to the Commercial Sales Room to pick up some beauties that I know I can't live without. Which brings me to the topic of this column. How to pick out an African violet to take home.

Whether you are growing to show the plant or you just want a plant to add color and beauty to your house, choosing the African violet is one of the most important steps. It all starts at the beginning. You will need to choose the African violet variety first. Some hobbyists look for certain varieties: they may be looking for new varieties or varieties they have seen at club shows. They may have searched the "And the Winners Are" column of the *African Violet Magazine* and want varieties which have been grown and proven to win in shows, or they may be looking to replace an older variety which they have grown and enjoyed in the past but somehow got lost. On the other hand, many growers are not so focused on the variety; they are looking for a beautiful plant to place in their home.

When perusing a table of African violets, your eye is first drawn to the blossom color. After years of hybridizing, African violets come in a variety of colors from the standard colors of purple, pink, and white, newer hybrid colors of red and yellow, to anything in between. Blossom color patterns also are endless: solids, stripes, edged, fantasies, thumb prints, two-tones, and mixtures of all of these. The blossom type can also be single, semi-double or double, and the shape and type of blossom petals can vary: star, pansy, or wasp. Further, the edge of the blossom can be straight edged or fringed. Regardless of blossom color, pattern, and type, make sure that all blossoms on the plant are consistent. I will not purchase a plant where half of the blossoms show fantasy and the rest of the blossoms do not. To make sure that the plant is blooming true to its description, I always try to purchase blooming plants (with at least one open blossom).

Type of foliage is the next consideration, although it is the first consideration for some growers. African violet foliage can be solid green or variegated. The solid green foliage can be light, medium, or dark, and the darker foliage may have a red reverse. The variegated foliage comes in many patterns: Tommy Lou variegation shows green leaves with white edges, mosaic variegation has complex color patterns on the foliage, and crown variegated plants have light center leaves which become darker as they age. Foliage variegation can be found in shades of white, pink, and green. I have recently seen light green foliage with lighter green stripes. The shape of the foliage is also a consideration when purchasing a plant. Foliage shapes can be plain (boy), heart-shaped, pointed, long and narrow, wasp (one large and two smaller leaf lobes), deeply scalloped (girl), quilted, ruffled, or spooned. Regardless of the foliage type and color, do not purchase a plant with too much white on the variegation. The chloro-

plasts in the leaves are what gives the foliage its green color. Chloroplasts are needed for photosynthesis (the process where the plant derives energy from light, nutrients, and water and gives off carbon dioxide). If the leaves have too much white in their variegation, then the plant will not be able to produce energy efficiently and will be more difficult to grow.

Lastly, when choosing an African violet variety, you need to know its type and how much space you can devote to the plant. Miniature plants have small leaves and can grow up to a 6 inch diameter; semiminiature plants can grow up to 8 inches in diameter, and standard plants grow much bigger with bigger leaves. Plants designated as "large" should be reserved for the hobbyist who has plant carts with lights and lots of room because they can grow up to 24 inches or more in diameter. Lastly, trailers are a good choice if you like bushy African violets and you don't want to worry about removing suckers.

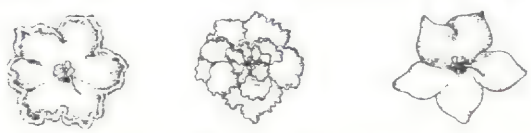
The variety chosen by the grower is a completely personal choice, depending on the person's likes and dislikes. With all the choices in foliage and blossom colors, patterns, and types, it is no wonder that the African Violet Master Variety List is quickly approaching 10,000 registered varieties.

Perhaps more important than the variety chosen is the condition of the plant when purchasing a new African violet. Always choose plants from reputable growers: either commercial African violet suppliers (see www.AVSA.org), African violet hybridizers, African violet clubs and its members, or reputable nurseries and plant stores.

When purchasing a plant, take a good look at it. DON'T CHOOSE A PLANT SOLELY ON BLOSSOM AND FOLIAGE TYPE. Questions to keep in mind when shopping are:

1. Does the foliage look healthy? Are the leaves shiny and stiff or are they limp and dull? Is the foliage dried out and brown? Is the shape, color, and variegation on the foliage consistent on all leaves?
2. Do the blossoms look healthy? Are they fresh and colorful or are the blossoms dried out and dying before they open? Are all the blossoms consistent in color, shape, and pattern? If you look at them closely under a strong light, the blossoms should have a glittery appearance.
3. What is the symmetry of the plant? This can be more difficult to assess on young plants but look for foliage that lies flat. It should not be standing straight up, and leaves should not have long petioles (leaf stems). Remember that African violets produce leaves with a symmetry of three (three leaves equal distance apart); look for plants that show good symmetry or at least show good potential for symmetry.
4. Is the plant infested with critters? If you blow on the leaves do thrips jump out? Are fungus gnats flying all around the plant? Is a big cock roach munching on the leaves? Some critters can be contained with pesticides but try to welcome as few into your home as possible.
5. Does the plant show signs of other pests? Is there a white powdery substance (powdery mildew) on the leaves? This can be controlled by spraying and good ventilation. Does the plant have a white filamentous coating on the stem at the leaf joint or on its roots if you can see them? This is due to mealy bugs which are very difficult to control. Do not buy plants infested with mealy bugs. Is the center of the plant healthy looking or are the center leaves much smaller than they should be, grey in color, and pointed? This is due to botrytus which is also difficult to control; pass on this plant.
6. Is the plant potted firmly? Can you spin the plant around in its pot? This is a sign of root damage. You don't want to be able to move the plant around in its pot; it should be firmly planted. However, it should be kept in mind that very young plants may not have sufficient roots to anchor firmly in the pot. Use your own judgement on this point.

In conclusion, when purchasing a new addition to your collection, choose the variety which you like best and choose strong, healthy, vibrant plants. If you remember these above considerations, you will not be disappointed with the results. You do not want to bring home a sickly plant and possibly infect other plants in your collection. Healthy plants will be sturdy and bloom consistently for years to come. Remember, it all starts at the beginning!



Multiple Crowns

by Sharon Holtzman

Remove a multiple crowned plant from its pot and shake off as much of the old soil as possible so you can easily see each crown. Sometimes it is easy to pull them away from each other. If not, cut them off, trying to get some roots with each one. These should then be planted in their own small pot for growing on. The pots should only be watered lightly. If the plant does not have a good root system, it would be helpful to slip the pot into a plastic bag for a few weeks to keep the humidity level up until the plant begins to show new growth.

Vermiculite: Healthy or Harmful?

by David Buttram • Independence, MO

It was an invitation I didn't relish at the time, but my mother insisted that my three brothers and I visit our next door neighbor's African violet room. Our neighbor, an osteopathic physician, had converted her sun porch into a violet room with several shelves built especially to hold her collection of plants. The doctor rarely invited neighbors to see her violets, so Mother was quick to accept her invitation.

This was in the late 1940s when you could get any color of African violet as long as it was blue or purple. I was disappointed when I first walked in. I thought: *These are all alike. What's the big deal?* I remember that Dr. Remmert used to ask all the neighborhood women to give her their empty coffee cans. I learned why – she grew her plants in one pound coffee cans. The cans were about six inches in diameter and approximately four inches tall – today we would call such a pot a "squatty" or bulb pan. Her soil was rich, black loam from her garden. There were no artificial lights – just a good southern exposure.

Just as our country was undergoing great changes following the War, so were African violets. The dark blues and purples began to give way to the hybridizing efforts of growers such as Lyndon Lyon, Frank Tinari, Hugh Eyerdom, Forrest Richter, and others. Gradually blooms of pink, white, and red in a variety of shapes and sizes appeared. Soon clay pots grew in popularity and were later replaced by the cleaner, lighter plastic pots. Growers learned to supplement the irregular sunlight with electric fixtures that were automatically timed.

As the number of growers increased, so did the demand for a more stable growing medium. Some experts believe as many as 80% of plant problems can be traced to a poor soil. Garden "dirt" was readily available to most, but a more consistent, sterile, good draining, slightly acid growing medium was desired. Cornell University, in conjunction with commercial growers, developed the revolutionary potting/growing mix that met their needs.

The Cornell mix, sometimes called the "peat-lite" mix, requires three parts of sphagnum peat moss, two parts vermiculite and one part of perlite (Sometimes called Sponge-Rok). Lime and other components like charcoal may be added as needed. Hobbyists and commercial African violet growers quickly adopted the mix for it met all their criteria.

For many growers, this was the introduction to vermiculite. In its original form, vermiculite is a micaceous mineral that when heated expands (exfoliates) to eight to twelve times its original thickness. The resulting spaces between the layers can absorb and hold water, yet it does not readily pack. Its irregular shapes help maintain air spaces to keep fibrous roots from "drowning." Many of the surfaces are "wiggley", resembling a small worm. Thus, the name from the Latin *vermiculus* meaning "little worm". Vermiculite is strip-mined commercially in Australia, Brazil, China, Kenya, South Africa, United States, and Zimbabwe. The largest mine in the world is in the Palbora region in northeastern Transvaal in South Africa.

Vermiculite was considered safe until a few years ago when reports caused some alarm among its users. *Newsweek, McCall's*, National Public Radio, a segment on 20/20, and several newspaper stories reported the presence of a form of asbestos called tremolite in vermiculite, especially a brand of insulation called Zonolite. Zonolite was mined in a huge mine in Libby, Montana by the W. R. Grace and Co. from 1963 to 1990. Asbestos can cause diseases such as asbestosis and mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer. Unfortunately, symptoms of mesothelioma may not appear until ten to forty years after the asbestos is inhaled. Tragically, the residents of Libby, Montana have developed asbestos-related diseases at a rate 60 times greater than similar size geographic areas elsewhere. The Libby mine has been closed for fifteen years, but an estimated 35 million homes in the United States still have Zonolite in their attics.

Zonolite was mined, packaged, and sold primarily as house insulation. It was cheap and convenient for home-builders to use. I, along with several African violet friends, bought and used Zonolite. Although the particles were much larger than horticultural grade, we used it in trays to hold water (maintain humidity), used it as a rooting medium, and some even used it in a peat-lite mix. One nationally known horticulture supply house currently lists Zonolite in their catalog, so *caveat emptor.*

Not long after closing the mine, W.R. Grace and Co. filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code. It has been estimated that litigation world-wide may total $100 billion dollars

After several delays, the Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA) issued warnings on handling vermiculite: Note: They use "vermiculite" and "Zonolite" interchangeably.

- Do not disturb vermiculite insulation (Zonolite).
- If you must go into the attic containing vermiculite insulation, make every effort to limit number, duration, and activity level of each trip.
- Do not allow children or pets to play in open areas of an attic with vermiculite insulation.
- Never attempt to remove vermiculite insulation. Hire a professional.
- Hire a professional to remove vermiculite if you remodel or renovate.

On-going tests indicate initially that all the vermiculite currently being mined and sold is free from tremilite or other contaminates. However, the EPA advises consumers to: 1. Use vermiculite outdoors in a well-ventilated area; 2. Avoid creating dust by keeping vermiculite damp during use; 3. Avoid bringing dust into the house on clothing; 4. Buy premixed soils, which normally contain more moisture, and 5. Use other amendments such as coconut fiber, peat, sawdust, bark, and others.

In research for this article, I learned that a wide difference of opinion exists as to the dangers of vermiculite. One side claims the asbestos threat is of grave concern to every American. They quote facts and statistics to bolster their fears. On the opposite side are those who quote their facts and statistics proving no health risk is involved for casual exposure to the asbestos-laced vermiculite. As with many similar debates, the answer is probably near the middle, and we must look at both sides to arrive at a reasoned solution.

For additional information on vermiculite or Zonolite, visit EPA'S web site which will require Adobe Acrobat Reader to access it (this software can be downloaded free). You may also call the EPA Hotline at 1-800-471-7127 with any questions or concerns.

Over fifty years have passed since that summer day when I reluctantly saw my first African violets. Dr. Remmert and her big white house are gone now as is ours - both homes have been replaced by a parking lot. The coffee cans long ago turned to rust. The all blue and purple single blossom collections have been replaced by a veritable rainbow of beautiful specimen plants grown and carefully groomed and pampered with sterile potting medium, in light that is timed for optimum growth and flowering. And the tiny seeds of love and appreciation for the beauty and wonder of nature planted that afternoon by a caring neighbor lay dormant for many years. Finally, what had been planted in a boy germinated, grew, and matured in the heart and mind of a man, providing him with limitless happiness, fulfillment, and many friends.

How's Your Membership? Ebbing or Flowing?

If you're like many of our affiliates, your membership numbers may be sitting still – or even decreasing. Because we don't want to take up precious space in this tremendous magazine that really should be devoted to growing African violets and their cousins, my vice-chair, Annie Rieck, and I have devised a new plan of action! We're writing a quarterly newsletter targeted to getting – and keeping members. It promises to bring some good ideas that will add some active discussion to your meetings.

Don't shove this to the back of your "to do" list! If you didn't receive the Premier Issue by now, that means that your e-mail address listed in the ASVA website is incorrect, and we have notified the Web master to remove it so potential members do not get discouraged if they try to contact you. If you don't have an active e-mail address or prefer to be listed on the web site without it, please e-mail one of us and let us know of someone else in your affiliate who would be willing to share it with us privately so that we can send this important information. We promise we won't share the e-mail address with anyone else. For cost-effectiveness, we are unable to send this information by snail mail, so please contact either one of us with this information so you don't miss a single issue of this important communication.

Carolee Carter
carolee37@earthlink.com

Adrienne Rieck
annie97@aol.com

2005 VACATION GUIDE

Compiled by David Buttram

Even with rising gasoline prices, many people are making plans to travel by car this summer. Whether taking a vacation, traveling on business, or day tripping to the country, consider stopping to visit AVSA Commercial members listed below. There are several new listings this year as well as several changes of telephone numbers, addresses, and other information. Many of the growers have a wide selection of other gesneriads and houseplants. Please note that several growers are available by appointment only. Please make the necessary arrangements in advance of your visit.

The list of growers is laid out as though you were driving from New York southward... Then the growers are listed in a zigzag manner up and down across the country winding up in Alaska and then back to Canada where our Canadian friends are eager to see you. Drive safely, stay well, and enjoy your trip. If you cannot travel this year, be sure to look at some of the beautiful Internet sites listed.

Lyndon Lyon Greenhouses, Inc.
Paul Sorano
14 Mutchler St.
P.O. Box 249, Dolgeville, NY 13329
315-429-8291
E-mail: info@lyndonlyon.com
8:00 AM-4:00 PM (Mon- Fri),
10:00 AM-4:00 PM (Sat),
Noon-4:00 PM
(Sun - April through Sept only).
African violets, Gesneriads. Located just ten minutes off Interstate 90, in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains.
www.lyndonlyon.com

Violet Venture
Fay Wagman
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E-mail: fayw@aol.com
By appointment - please call ahead.
Visitors welcome.
Retail, Standards, Minis, Supplies, Variegates, Gesneriads
www.janesworld.org.

The Violet Barn
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12:00 PM -5:00 PM, every day of week.
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African violets, other gesneriads, and rare and unusual flowering houseplants.
Begonias, Hoyas. We ship anywhere in the world, anytime of the year. Tours welcome.
www.violetbarn.com or
www.robsviolet.com

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By appointment only
www.bloominjungle.com

Smith's Country Cottage
Geoffrey Smith
109 Ogden Parma T. L. Rd.
Spencerport, NY 14559
585-352-6445
E-mail: gsmith352@netzero.net
10:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Monday through Saturday

Violet Gallery
Mahlen and Brenda Petry
1590 Cranberry Rd.
York Springs, PA 17372
717-528-8268
E-mail: mpetry@cvn.net
By appointment
www.violetgallery.com

Bluebird Greenhouse
Libbie Glembocki
4821 Jessie Rd.
Apex, NC 27539
919-362-0530
E-mail: libbie@bluebirdgreenhouse.com
9:00 AM-12:00 PM weekdays.
Other times by appointment.
Retail, Wholesale, Violets, orchids, supplies.
www.bluebirdgreenhouse.com

Carousel of Violets
Bonnie N. Cheek
1403-C South Stradford Rd.
Winston-Salem, NC 27103
336-760-2898
E-mail: carousel-of-violets@yahoo.com
Tuesday through Friday
11:00 am to 5:00 pm
Saturday - 11:00 am to 4:00 pm
www.carouselofviolrts.com

Travis' Violets
Travis Davis
2064 Ellen St.,
P.O. Box 42, Ochlocknee, GA 31773
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Open 7 days a week (our choice) with an appointment.
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www.travisviolets.com

Mrs. Strep Streps
Kathy Spissman
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770-939-5289
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Please call for an appointment.
Streptocarpus, chiritas and other gesneriads.

Crazy Bout Violets
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850-581-1549
E-mail: crazyboutviolets@aol.com
Weekdays: 9:00 AM to noon –
Saturdays 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM.
By appointment only.
Website coming soon!

Selective Gardener
Monique Holtkamp
P. O. Box 78398, Nashville, TN 37207
615-309-0594
E-mail: monique@selectivegardener.com
selectivegardener.com

Belisle's
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715-945-2687
By appointment.
Retail, Standards, Minis, Variegates, Gesneriads.
www.belislesviolethouse.com

Phyton Corporation
Will Hartfeldt, *Chairman*
7449 Cahill Road, Edina, MN 55439
952-944-9779
E-mail: infophytoncorp.com
8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
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www.phytoncorp.com

Kent's Flowers
Kent & Joyce Stork
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Fremont, NE 68025
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E-mail: kents@tvsonline.net
9:00 AM through 5:00PM (Mon.-Sat.).
African violets, plants and supplies, along with fresh flowers..

McKinney's Glasshouse
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316-838-0097 or 316-838-5090
Please call for an appointment.
Gesneriads, dwarf terrarium plants, rare and exotic tropicals.
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gesneriads@aol.com

Pat's Pets
Gary & Pat Dunlap
4189 Jarvis Rd., Hillsboro, MO 63050
636-789-3604.
E-mail: patspets@jcn1.com
Please contact us by E-mail, phone or mail for appointment.
African violets, gesneriads, potting mix, supplies. Internet catalog
http://www.jcn1.com/patspets

Dave's Violets
David Harris
1372 S. Kentwood Ave.
Springfield, MO 65804-0220
417-887-8904
E-mail: plantman@ipa.net
By appointment only.
African violets, gesneriads and supplies.
www.davesviolets.com

JoS Violets
Joanne Schrimsher
2205 College Dr.
Victoria, TX 77901
361-575-1344
E-mail: josviolets@yahoo.com
By appointment.
African violets and supplies.
geocities.com/josviolets

Shirley's House of Violets
Sandy & Shirley Sanders
1034 Rayburn Dr.,
San Antonio, TX 78221
210-923-1093
E-mail: sassyshirl@aol.com
9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Retail, Standards, Minis, Variegates, Soil, Pots, Fertilizer

Hill Country African Violets & Nursery
Ken Froboese
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Boerne, TX 78006
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Fax:: 830-249-8658
8:00 AM –6:00 PM, 7 days a week
NO LISTS - NO SHIPPING. Complete retail nursery. Visitors welcome.

The Violet Showcase
Douglas & Barbara Crispin
3147 So. Broadway
Englewood, CO 80113
303-761-1770
Fax: 303-762-1808
10:00 AM-5:00 PM. Mondays and Wednesdays through Saturdays
Closed Tuesdays and Sundays.
African violets and growing supplies.
wwwvioletshowcase.com.

Violet Perfection by Gini
Gini McCanne
1420 Oxford Ave.
Claremont, CA 91711
909-624-8331
E-mail: violetperfection@earthlink.net
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African violets, streps, self-watering ceramic and plastic pots.
wwwvioletperfection.com

Maril Products, Inc.
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320 W. 6th St.,
Tustin, CA 92780
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E-mail physan@earthlink.net
Monday through Wednesday
7:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Friday 7:00 AM to Noon.
Closed Saturday and Sunday.
We only sell Physan 20. We do not sell violets or other supplies.
www.physan.com

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www.thevelvetleaf.com.

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E-mail: sales@aussie-gold.com
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Alannah's Greenhouses
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250-442-2552
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Standards, Minis, Variegates, gesneriads, geraniums, and tropical plants.
www.alannah.com

Beverly's Violets
Beverly Hendricks
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Anchorage, AK 99504
907-338-4510
Call for appointment
Visitors are welcome

Aca's Violet-Tree
John and Doris Brownlie
80-600 Silvercreek Blvd.
Mississauga, Ont., Canada L5A 2B6
905-270-6776
E-mail: jtbrownlie@direct.com
Anytime by appointment

Bloomin' Basement
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224 Douglas Woods Point,
S.E., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2Z 2A7
403-279-3826
"If I'm home, I'm open."

Violets-O-Ley
Nancy and Russell Ley
6819 Edenwood Drive,
Mississauga, Ont., Canada L5N 3X9
905-824-2950
E-mail: violets-o-ley@rogers.com
By appointment- Please call ahead.
African violet, some species and gesneriad especially mini sinningias, epicias
http://members.rogers.com/violets-o-ley

Fighting With Peat Moss!

by Joyce Stork

Have you ever had to battle a potted violet that had gone bone dry? The water shoots through, and the violet is still bone dry! Ever sneezed and coughed as you potted because the potting mix was so dusty? You've been in a fight with peat moss!

Most potting mixes today include some peat moss. The most desirable is sphagnum peat moss which is a wonderful base in mixes and is easily available, reasonably inexpensive, and very adaptable. The highest quality sphagnum peat moss will have a silvery brown color and long fibers that have a slightly waxy surface. The best quality seems to come from bogs in Canada or New Zealand. Sphagnum peat is more desirable because it resists packing better and has a more neutral pH than the lower quality black sedge peat moss that is often sold in discount potting mixes.

When sphagnum peat moss is moist, it is a delight. The moist peat will easily draw up water from constant watering systems and retains quantities of water within the cells of the fiber, like a sponge, allowing air to circulate throughout the peat and the other components of the mix. Roots thrive, plants remain hydrated, and African violets flourish.

But when sphagnum peat goes totally dry, it can be very difficult to get it to take up water again. Many commercial potting mixes have a wetting agent added to the mix for just this reason. The wetting agent is similar to soap. It breaks down the waxy surface of the peat fibers, allowing water to soak in. Often, wetting agents decline after about six months. If the peat becomes dry after that time, it will not easily take up water, and it turns into a stiff dry cast of the pot.

It is best to buy sphagnum peat moss or peat-based mixes in dry bales or bags. Stored dry, the moss will remain usable for years, while moist moss will deteriorate and become acid. Growers are often advised to repot yearly to replace potting mix because of the pH drop that occurs when peat is kept wet for an extended period of time. Dry peat also discourages fungus gnat infestation.

When it is time to pot, however, it is best to get the peat mix thoroughly damp. Damp potting mix produces less dust and is more pleasant to work with. It is also safer for the plant since delicate roots may dehydrate if they come in contact with very dry potting mix. To get it properly moistened, fill a container with the dry mix and add a volume of water equal to at least half that of the potting mix. Stirring and kneading the potting mix as water is added will speed the absorption. Boiling or very hot water is absorbed much more quickly than cold or room temperature water. The heat helps break down the resistance of the waxy surface, allowing the fibers to soak up water. Be sure to allow a day or two for the mix to cool to room temperature before using it for potting.

It is more challenging if a potted violet goes totally dry. Boiling water and/or stirring the soil would destroy the plant! One technique that works is to water the plant from the top with a quart of slightly warm water that has a drop of pure dishwashing liquid (such as Ivory or Palmolive) mixed in. Top-water enough for it to run through the pot, and then drain off the excess immediately. This will cause the peat to absorb some water and moisten the roots, but will not overwhelm the dehydrated root system. The following day, enough room temperature water should be added at the top of the pot so that water will run through into a saucer. Allow the violet to stand in the run-off water for about thirty minutes. If the peat remains somewhat dry (the pot will still feel lightweight), pour more water through the pot until it feels heavy and the mix seems damp. The easiest way to solve the problem is to keep violets at least slightly moist at all times.

Handle peat moss correctly and it won't be such a fight!

Vintage Violets

Barbara Elkin
Vintage Violets Committee
2855 Gayle Lane
Auburn, CA 95602-9674
Email: bjabar@earthlink.net

NOAH'S ARK

February and March were the wettest months we have ever had. The normal rainfall for us in Central California is 16 inches. Southern California has a normal rainfall of half that. Thank heavens I live on a mountain.

I hope someone out there has a plant on the following list. We just don't want to lose our African Violet Heritage. I have requests for all of the Eyerdom plants, Gehr's plants, and now someone wants all the chimeras! Read carefully and help these violet growers out.

AVSA Most Wanted

Africa, Allen Anthony
Aly's Afternoon Delight
Aly's Clueless
Aly's Passionella
Aly's Phantom
Aly's Roger Shifflett
Aly's Victorian Tease
Angel's Petticoats
Ann Malinich
Armadillo Stew
Atlantic City
Bella Gitana
Bleuberi Sundae
Bewitched
Blue Fox
Blue Frost
Blue Pinwheel
Blue Satin Bow
Bon Jovi
Brad Richard
Brandi Jolene
Bryte Daydreams
Buckeye Cranberry Swirl
Canadian Sunrise
Candy Hearts
Candy Stripes
Candytuft Surprise
Cape Cod Crisscross
Cape Cod Raspberry Sherbet
Cape Coral
Captain James
Carousel
Carousel Lady
Cartoon Balloon
Chimo
City Slicker
Colonial Jubilee
Color Flash
Commander Spock
Connie Salland
Coral Sunset Sport
Cosmic Tapestry
Cottage Rose
Critic's Choice
Crown Center
Crystal Rose
Daisy's Delight
Dancing Lights
Dan's Favorite
Dark Orbit
Dazzling Daidrian
Debonair
Deer Path
Disco Dancing Sport
Designer Silk
Doctor Sandy
Dolphin Tears
Dora Lee
Double Vision
Drizzle
Earl and Joyce
Easter Kiss
Edge of Midnight
Edna R.
Esme
Ever Amber
Exotic Star
Fairy Fireworks
Fancy Nights
Fancy That
Fantasize
Fantasy Starburst
Fantasy Sunburst
Fantasy Treasure
Father Figure
First Child Sport
Flash of Blue
Foolin' Around
Free Spirit
Freeze Frame
Frozen Ghost
Galaxy Glow
Galaxy of Stars
Gehr's Forget Me Not
George Malinich
Georgie Boy
Glen Meadow
Glitter Surprise
Granger's Normandy
Groovy Kinda Love
Hannah
Heartland
Heidi
Helen Boyer
Hiroshima
Holy Smoke
Houdini (Gehr)
Indian PowWow
Io
Jalapeno
Jeedle Jay
Joie de Vivre
Jolie Roxanne
July Celebration
Kamon's Star
Katsuko
Keiko
Kiwi Brandy
Kiwi Candy Floss
Kiwi Christmas Cheer
Kiwi Mischief
Kiwi Radiance
Kiwi Splendor
Ko's Maria Chow
Kumiko
Lady Hawk
Lake Geneva
Lauren Nicole
Leona Sport
Licorice Stick
Lin
Little Amber
Lively Lana
Lollipop
Lorus' Springtime
Love Fancy
Love Stripes
Lovely Luck
Lovely Dove
Luv's Reflection
Lyon's Kissy Face
Lyon's Rendezvous
Lyon's Wild Card
Magic Dragon
Magic Moment
Magic Potion
Mai Tai
Maria Rose
Manitou
Mary Galipo
McCoy's Folly
Mermaid Dancer
Miami Maid
Millie-Jo
Mint Condition
Miz Ellie
Mollie Howell
Moonlight Waves
Mt Fuji
My Mary Sue
My Pretty Mistress
Nautical
Nel's Whirly Bird
Ness Blue Ribbons
Ness' Morning Star
Ness' Pink Ribbons
Neutron Star
Nevada Sport
North Carolina Sport
Oh Melba
On Edge
Orana
Ovation
Park Central Disco
Party Star
Paula Sophia
Peppermint Fling
Peppermint Lace
Petticoat Lane
Pima Stars
Pink Elephant
Pink Ribbons
Pink Satin
Plaything
Plum Sporty
Preferred Stock
Purple Majesty
Purple Pinwheel
Purple Prince
Pyewacket
Quiet Storm
Quite Foxy
Rag Doll
Rainbow's Malahini
Raspberry Charm Stripe
Raspberry Sherbet
Raspberry Sundae
Ray of Hope
Rebel's Carousel
Rebel's Fairy Stars
Rebel's Lollipop
Red Edena
Red Pinwheel
Red Ribbons
Rhonda Sport
Ribbon's n' Lace
Royal Child
Ruffles n' Romance
Sailor's Sunset
Sapporo
Satellite
Show Magic
Silk Reflections
Sketch Artist
Sketches
Soul Music
Southern Daydream
Special Effects
Spirit North
Spring Fancy
Spring Kiss
Stars and Stripes Sport
Striped Honey
Strobe Lite
Sue Hoffmann
Sugar n' Spice
Suncoast Starsplash
Sunset Australis
Supreme Splendor
Supreme Waves
Supreme Willie
Susanny
Susie's Delight
Sweet Caroline
Sweet Cheeks
Sweet Obsession
Sweet Sugar
Taffy Pull
Tamara's Balgownie
Tarhar's Bulldog
Tarjar's Don Goodwin
Terrace Garden
Tete a Tete
Thanks Alyce
The Parsons Little Pammy
Tiger Musky
Tomoko
Top Shelf
Toy Soldier
Tula
Victorian Fantasy
Victorian Jewels
Way Out
Wheels of Fortune
Windfall
Winter Olympic
Woodland Sprite
Worth It
Yarrow Briar Rose
Yarrow Summit
Zaca Roonie
Zaca's Fantah
Zaca's Geogette
Zodiac

Question Box

Ralph Robinson
P.O. Box 9
Naples, NY 14512
Email: robsviolet@aol.com

By the time this is read, it will by May, and the national convention in Cincinnati will be a pleasant memory. For us, it will be both that and the last of eight shows we've exhibited and/or sold in since January. Whew! Here's hoping you had a chance to at least visit a local affiliate show during that time. If you haven't, plan on doing so. There's no better way of seeing the hobby at its best. If you're more ambitious (like us), start making plans to attend next year's national convention show in Minneapolis!

As is always the case, we are far too busy to reply to mail (or e-mail), though we do read all of it. Should you want a personal reply, we are more than willing to answer phone calls made during our normal business hours (12-5 pm EST), since we can work and talk at the same time. For those with access to the internet, we can be reached at robsvioletaol.com or via our web-site at www.violetbarn.com. The web-site also contains a wealth of information (and answers to many of your questions).

QUESTION: *What do growers water their violets with? Twenty years ago, I saved the water from the de-humidifier to use on my violets. When I had to use tap water, the leaves would look horrible! Now I just have a few violets and get gallons of distilled water which seems to appease them.*

Answer: We use dehumidifier water ourselves, when we have it. In the summer, we collect the runoff from our air conditioner (sometimes as much as 60 gallons or more a day!). Basically, this is distilled water, nearly pure except for whatever contamination it gets from the refrigerated coils. We do this primarily because we otherwise use water drawn from a well which, in our case, is quite "hard" (alkaline). When we use our well-water, we add vinegar, which lowers the pH of the water to near-neutral. Before we learned to do this, we'd get lots of pale, yellowish foliage on our plants. Of course, our water still remains high in mineral salts which we can sometimes see as a white, crusty, buildup on the soil surface of our plants. They remain nice and green, though, and regular repotting and refreshing of the soil keeps the buildup of salts to a tolerable level.

Of course, this can be an expensive way to produce distilled water, given the cost of electricity. But if you're going to be using these appliances anyway, may as well make use of their "waste". In our case, it's another way of recycling (there's very little that we don't reuse or recycle), it benefits our plants, and since well-water can be scarce (wells have been known to go dry), why waste any of it?

QUESTION: *I have standard-size violets that bloom but just don't seem to want to grow. The center leaves are small and stunted, and the foliage looks pale and dull. I've looked for pests, but haven't found any. I think the light is sufficient, and I fertilize regularly. Any ideas?*

Answer: This is a question that we received by phone (and paraphrased). It turns out that the problem wasn't light, at least not a lack of it, since his violets seemed to be blooming regularly, though too much light could be partly responsible for crowded growth in the center of the plant and the dull appearance of the foliage. The bigger problem was not a lack of fertilizer, but the choice of fertilizer, a 10-60-10 formula, relatively low in nitrogen and very high in phosphorus content.

This reminded Olive (a.k.a. Mrs. Robinson) of an experience of hers growing violets some years ago. Having read that high-phosphorus fertilizers might be good in promoting root growth and blooms, she used such a fertilizer on many of her plants. They did, indeed, bloom. However, they exhibited symptoms almost identical to those described by our caller - small leaves and a crowded center. Growth on standard-size varieties was so stunted that they appeared more like semi-miniatures, and all had dull, bronze-colored foliage, not a lush green.

The lesson? Though African violets are blooming houseplants, high phosphorus, "bloom-boosting" fertilizers can sometimes do more harm than good, especially when used as a steady diet. Using them to excess starves the plant of the nitrogen that it needs. Like all living things, your plants need a "balanced" diet, the most important part of which is nitrogen, necessary for the most important chemical process in the plant-photosynthesis. Starve it of nitrogen, and you starve the plant. Not that other nutrients aren't important, but it all starts with nitrogen. A healthy plant will bloom, even without high doses of phosphorus. Personally we use a balanced (17-17-17) fertilizer on many of our plants, and even use a high-nitrogen, low-phosphorus (21-5-20) fertilizer on the others. The latter formula, we've found, works especially well given our highly alkaline water.

QUESTION: *Sometimes I'm just not home for a number of days and, though it's not intentional, some of my plants become very dry, nearly to the point of wilting. I water them heavily, but sometimes it just doesn't seem to help and they've ended up losing lots of leaves (or dying). I suspect that my watering doesn't help much once the plant gets too dry. Besides not letting them ever dry out, which I know will happen, what can I do?*

Answer: Though the peat-based, "soilless" potting mixes most of us use have many advantages, one problem is getting the mix wet again once it's become very dry. Worse, when it dries, it shrinks away from the sides of the pot so that any water poured onto it runs over the edges, around the root ball, and out the bottom of the pot. You might pour a pint of water into a pot, thinking you've watered it well, when all you've really gotten wet is what's underneath the pot. Of course, the best solution is to avoid the problem by sticking to the water when "dry to the touch" rule. At this point, the root ball is sufficiently dry to need a good watering, but not so dry as to shrink-away from the pot sides. Not being completely dry, the potting mix will also be more willing to absorb water.

To make the mix more willing to absorb water, you can also try adding a "wetting agent" - an additive to the water that makes it easier to penetrate the soil surface. Many of the commercial mixes include a wetting agent, but its effectiveness quickly disappears over time. When watering some of our older plants (in older soil), the water will just puddle on the soil surface, seemingly taking forever to soak into the soil. Our solution? Add a little dish detergent to the water (a few drops to a gallon of water). Any mild soap will work well as a wetting agent.

When a plant has gotten dry to the point that you can't be certain you're thoroughly watering the root ball, don't bother trying to add water. Submerge the entire root system in water. Find a deep saucer or pan, place the potted plant in it, then water from the top. Let the water run through the bottom and fill the saucer. Then let the plant sit there, deep in water, until the entire root ball is wet before removing the plant. Obviously, you wouldn't want to make a habit of this, since the very-dry to very-wet cycle isn't good for your violet in the long-term. Water next when the soil is "dry to the touch", and drastic measures aren't necessary.

QUESTION: *I am interested in several plants from your website, but I really want to select my plants carefully, because I live in an apartment with north-facing windows only. Here are my primary choices - will they do well and/or bloom in my apartment? Pentadinia orientandina, Chirita 'Kitaguni', Kohleria, Saintpaulia magungensis.*

Answer: African violets and many other gesneriads can be successfully grown in north-facing windows, with limitations. Keep in mind that any plant grown in a window will only perform as well as the conditions in the window, at that time, will allow. North-facing windows, because they never receive any direct sunlight (at least not in the northern hemisphere) will, all else equal, not provide as much light for your plants as will windows in other exposures. This is especially true for those of us in northern climates, where days tend to be very short and dull in mid-winter.

What this means is that plants grown in windows, especially north-facing ones, will tend to grow more "seasonally" than those grown under artificial lights, where lighting remains relatively unchanged day to day. Your plants will likely tend to bloom only from late spring to early fall, when days are longer and brighter, and very little, if at all, during the winter.

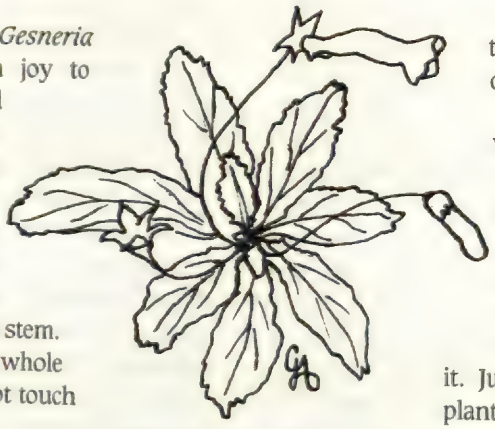
This doesn't mean that you can't grow these plants in your apartment, only that there are limitations. As for choice of plants, this depends upon the growth habits and light requirements of each, as well time you're willing to invest in accommodating them to your environment. Upright-growers, like *Pentadinia* and *Kohleria*, will grow a bit more "leggy" in the less-bright conditions of your northern windows but still can look attractive and bloom. They'll need to be pruned and repotted a bit more often (especially the *Kohleria*) to keep them looking full and bushy. *Chirita*, like African violets, grow in a rosette-form, and their appearance will be less affected by light they receive, though their leaves may tend to "reach" a bit when days are especially short and/or dark. Regularly turn your plants in the window to keep the growth even and symmetrical. All will still bloom, though more seasonally than they might in an east or west-facing window.

Perhaps your best choice might be the species violet, *Saintpaulia magungensis*. The *Saintpaulia* species are very good choices for windows for a number of reasons. First, most don't mind it a bit cooler. Your cold windowsill in the winter will remind them of their "home" in their native East Africa. Second, many of them will tolerate, and even bloom, under less light than many of the modern hybrids. In their native habitat, they're used to being shaded by taller, larger plants. They're also generally very tolerant of your neglect - after all, if they can survive in the "wild", they can survive on your windowsill! *S. magunensis* would be a very good choice since it's trailing habit would be ideally suited to your window.

A Family Portrait

Georgene Albrecht
101 Oak Heights Drive
Oakdale, PA 15071
Email: georgena@verizon.net

This fibrous rooted gesneriad, *Gesneria* 'Flashdance' (guess-NAIR-ee-ah) is a joy to grow. It doesn't need much care and thrives in terrarium culture. The yellow-orange red blooms last a long time. This is considered a shrub-type gesneriad. Never let them dry out. Growth is rosette and produces side shoots as it ages. When it becomes leggy, it can be gently lowered and rooted like a *Kohleria* stem. The top of the soil needs some shredded whole sphagnum moss so that the leaves do not touch the soil mixture.



Gesneria 'Flashdance'

I have also just cut the entire root system off and rooted it in sphagnum, but sometimes it will not root and just dies. Keep the foliage dry. They like humidity but don't seem to like to be constantly wet, and they will rot if soil is water saturated. If they are planted in a light soil and watered once with a fertilizer, they may not need any more for months.

Other varieties you may want to grow are *G.* 'Lemon Drop' with lovely yellow blooms, or *G.* 'Tom Talpey' with red blooms, and the most common variety, *G. cuneifolia*, a small grower with orange-yellow flowers. Most vendors that sell gesneriads have a few available.

SWEET STRIPES

At the Ohio State Convention, Paul Sorano was selling a cute chimera called *S.* 'Little Misty Blue' which is a semi-miniature. The violet stripes have a sort of feathered white margin on the edge of the violet-blue petals. There are white specks and streaks, too. It is very distinctive. The foliage is variegated and shows pink when grown in cooler temperatures. I also got 'Rob's Cool Fruit' that I have wanted for some time because it wins show in many different parts of the country.

VIRUS ATTACK

Please read a separate article in this issue (page 41) about INSV, a very serious virus that is carried by thrips and has silently invaded many collections. Isolate everything and stop thrips. This is a nasty virus, but we can overcome it. Just use common sense, observe your plants closely, isolate, be meticulous about sanitation, and control thrips.

CORRECTION

There was a typo in my column in January 2004 that needs clarification. In the second paragraph under the topic "No Urea" text should read ".....others are Peter's, in several formulas and Schultz.....I used acrylic blanket material.....I also sprinkle some Di-syston granules..." Just one granule won't do much at all. Di-syston is a very dependable control of soil mealybug. Wear gloves if you have mixed this in your soil. It smells terrible because it wants you to know it is dangerous for you to handle.

PRECAUTION

When your pets go out into the garden, be aware that they can bring thrips into your growing area. There are many kinds of thrips, and most are capable of carrying INSV. I no longer allow my cats in my plant carts. They love to sleep in the warmth of the lights. I covered every stand with painters' drop cloths. This is another barrier to keep the thrips out. These tiny itty-bitty devils are not going to spoil my violet garden.

"Fads and Changes"

by John O'Reilly

I happened to come across an old issue of the *African Violet Magazine* (the AVSA publication) the other day and, as nearly always, found some articles of interest to me as a fairly serious grower of African violets for the past decade or so.

In one of these articles, the featured grower attributed her consistent success in growing beautiful African violets to "treating them like humans". However, she went on to stress (and this seems to cut across the normal way you would treat a human being) that she drew the line at conversing with her violets. It appears from the article that talking to, or if necessary, sometimes shouting at your plants was a fad popular with some American growers at that time.

Over the years, there have been a lot of different fads that have been put forward as the key to ensuring success with growing African violets.

Broadly, a fad is, of course, nothing more than a belief, practice, or perhaps craze that some people believe in for a short space of time. Fortunately, fads such as treating your plants like humans - whatever that means - or, alternatively, actually talking, shouting, or singing to them, playing classical or other motivational music in the plant room and so on, quickly disappear into thin air, the reason being that they are soon found to have no proven substance or validity.

Don't get me wrong. I have personally given a number of fads a trial run in the context of pursuing the hobby of growing African violets.

One that comes immediately to mind was the fad widely promoted some years ago that maintained that the inclusion of diatomaceous earth in your African violet potting mix spelt certain death to any incumbent soil mealy bugs. If only that were true.

In earlier days, there was a belief in some quarters that the best artificial light for the successful growing of African violets consisted of a combination of incandescent light and fluorescent light. I was so taken with the concept that I adapted a light stand to incorporate both types. Again, it turned out to be just another fad.

In addition to flirting with a few fads of this nature, I have made many changes from time to time in my approach to the day-to-day culture of my African violets.

Some of these were in effect forced changes. For example, and other growers will certainly have had similar experiences, it is disappointing, after basing your potting mix formula on a particular brand of peat moss, to suddenly find that it is no longer available. And who can ever forget the near panic that ensued when a preferred wicking material virtually became extinct.

Another very recent change that I have had to live with relates to the fertilizer that has long been part of our African violet potting mix. After numerous experiments, it appeared that the addition of this particular fertilizer to the potting mix consistently gave us better results. This may have been attributable, and hopefully readers will not classify this as just another fad, to the relatively high proportion of total Calcium [19%], including in particular Calcium Hydroxide [13.5%], reflected in the analysis as shown on the back of the empty bag sitting forlornly in front of me.

The product has been off the market for several years, and it is only now that we have come to the end of our stockpile, which is all the more unfortunate as there does not appear to be any closely compatible fertilizer currently available.

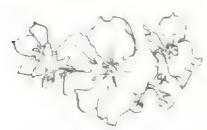
Other cultural changes have eventuated for a variety of different reasons. For example, I was initially an enthusiastic disciple of the "Texas potting method" for leaf propagation and so forth. These days I find it simpler, marginally cheaper, and, dare I say it, just as effective to use the same peat based potting mix for virtually all African violet purposes with the exception of seed propagation when a mix of 1 part fine or sifted peat and 3 parts of grade 2 vermiculite is preferred.

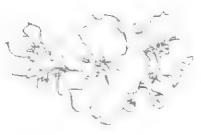
A switch from wick/reservoir watering to wick/saucer watering is another significant change that has been tried over a couple of years now without any apparent adverse consequences for the plants. I have found that this type of "bottom" watering (coupled with a lightening of the standard potting mix) has resulted in a more reliable watering of the plants, and in ordinary circumstances is for me a far quicker and more labor efficient approach than the normal wick watering method.

It should also be noted that with bottom watering properly carried out, the sort of algae problems that wick "waterers" are always understandably complaining about become a thing of the past.

Until the next fad or myth comes along, "happy growing."

From *The African Violet*, publication of the AV Association of Australia, Inc.





AERATION VS. WATER RETENTION

Jack Wilson
DeBary, Florida

We've now found that perfect potting mix and are ready to grow beautiful blue ribbon African violets for our next affiliate show. What is the next challenge we face in doing this? It may be trying to balance aeration and water retention. This is especially difficult and critical when using the small pots or containers we typically utilize. Most of us use 2" to 6" pots, and these are the most difficult sizes to achieve proper soil aeration and not retain excessive water.

That perfect potting mix of peat, perlite and vermiculite was formulated with the larger sizes of perlite and vermiculite for a reason. The larger sizes, #2 or horticultural grade, provide good air porosity (oxygen) and water retention. Particles too large cause greater air porosity but poor water retention. If particles are too small, then too much water is retained, and this, in turn, limits air porosity.

Pot or container size and shape also impact aeration and water retention. Larger sized ones, 6" or more, have less of a problem than the smaller ones do. Larger containers are also taller and therefore have more air space than the smaller containers.

Even how we handle our potting mixes before and after filling our pots affects air porosity and water retention. Our mixes should be watered prior to filling the pots. Both peat and vermiculite expand after absorbing water. If we water after filling the pot, the expansion decreases the air pores, and we have less air porosity.

Also take care in not compacting the mix inside the pot. Lightly tapping the pot on the table will settle the mix just fine. Don't press the mix down in the pot. Compacting the mix takes away air porosity and increases the probability of increased water retention.

Even how we water has a huge effect on air porosity and water retention of our plants. Again, our use of smaller sized pots increases our chances of over watering.

Following water through the mix is interesting. When you water, all pores are filled with water, displacing air from the pores. Drainage takes placed at the bottom of the pot while the saturation level starts to move downward and is replaced by air into the pores. Eventually the drainage stops and the lower part of the mix remains saturated with water. The size (height) of the saturation level is determined by the pore sizes of the mix, i.e., particle size of the mix. This is called capillarity.

The saturated mix at the bottom of the pot is our problem. Unless the plant roots can absorb the water from the saturated area, the roots will remain in water for a long period of time since evaporation from the top of the mix is a very slow process. Lack of oxygen to the roots puts the plant under extreme stress and makes it more susceptible to diseases.

What is really interesting is that the saturation zone is almost the same for all pots or containers since it is a function of the size of the pores in the mix. But, it has a greater effect on the smaller size pots since it will affect more of the mix's height. It may only be impacting 10% of a 6" pots' mix while impacting 35% or more of a 2 1/4" pot.

Do not add a layer of gravel, sand, or perlite to the bottom of the pot or container. This only compounds the problem since the saturation layer is only moved up, further reducing the unsaturated portion of the mix.

Now you are probably thinking, "How in the world can I water without killing my plants?"

You are using a great potting mix so half your problem is solved. It will drain properly and retain oxygen. If you are wick watering, the process will take care of itself. If you top or bottom water, you must ensure you do not over water. Watering more frequently with less water is one way. Also, never let plants sit in water for any period of time. Thirty minutes is twenty-five too long.

To grow African violets well, we need to provide for their cultural needs. This includes a proper balance of water and air. If we do this well, we will increase our chances for all blues at the next affiliate show.

What's Missing From This Picture?

Chances are, few of today's garden centers know as much about growing African Violets as you do. No doubt, this explains why so many knowledgeable Violet growers have a hard time finding the products they need. For anyone who knows what it takes to grow beautiful, full-blooming African Violets, it can be like putting together a puzzle, only to find there's a piece missing. We know the feeling. That's why we started the Selective Gardener, a plant care supplier that specializes in products for African Violets.

Everything You Need to Grow Beautiful, Full-Blooming African Violets

The Selective Gardener makes it easy to get the products you need. As a plant care supplier that specializes in African Violets, the Selective Gardener carries a full line of plant care products with brand names like Optimara.

- Fully-dissolving, urea-free fertilizers
- Self-watering devices such as the Watermaid and the new, spill-proof Optimara WaterShip
- Ultralight, pH-balanced potting media
- Pots, trays and plant covers
- Show accessories and more

From Leaf Cuttings to Finished Violets

In addition to plant care products, the Selective Gardener offers African Violets in several pot sizes, including genuine Miniatures. You can also order leaf cuttings from all of the available Optimara and Rhapsodie varieties.

A Complete African Violet Resource

The Selective Gardener is a complete African Violet resource. Send for the Selective Gardener catalog, and you will find offers for plant care products, Violets and leaf cuttings, even books and posters. Or go online, and you will find even more. At the Selective Gardener's internet site (http://www.selectivegardener.com), you will have access to a number of resources not available anywhere else.

- Growing tips from the world famous Holtkamp Greenhouses
- Complete interactive Violet identification guide
- Links to other useful sites such as Doctor Optimara, a symptom-based, interactive guide for diagnosing pests and pathogens
- Reviews of African Violet products

(**Tip:** If you do not have access to the internet, try your public library. Many libraries, now, provide computers for public use, as well as helpful assistance for anyone wanting to go online.)

The Selective Gardener Catalog

To receive the Selective Gardener catalog, send $1 (which will be credited to your first order) with your name and address to:

The Selective Gardener
6011 Martingale Lane
Brentwood, TN 37027

Or visit us online at
http://www.selectivegardener.com.

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Light and African Violets

by Edna Rourke

No matter what type of grower you are - large or small, windowsill or under lights, at some point most of us have wondered: what type of light is best for my plants? Which window is best? How far from the window should they be? Are my plants getting enough light? Are they getting too much light? What type of light can I use? What kind of fixture should I use? Which fluorescent bulb is better to use? How can I improve my symmetry?

Light is very important to an African violet. It requires a bright but diffuse light to grow and bloom. One of the most common reasons for an African violet not to bloom, especially if it is windowsill grown, is lack of sufficient light

Natural light and fluorescent will both give excellent results. However, the amount of natural light your plant receives cannot be exactly controlled. Most windowsill grown plants will not bloom as often or as profusely in winter months as at other times of the year. Some plants may require more light than a window can provide.

Almost any window can be used, but usually an easterly facing window would be best with a westerly window being a good second choice. A northern window can also be used, but you may need to supplement it with some type of artificial light. Plants will also do well in a southerly window if you take a few precautions to protect your plants from burning such as placing a sheer curtain to filter some of the intense sunlight from late spring and summer.

Placement of your plants is also variable depending upon which kind of window you use. For an easterly or westerly window, 15" to 18" will work well. While plants in a northerly window can be placed 12" to 14" inches from the glass, plants in a southerly window may need to be 18" to 14" inches away. You will have to experiment to see which works best for your location. You will also have to be aware of frost in the winter months and very hot glass in the spring and summer months.

For many of us, artificial lighting has proven to be the best choice. It is more economical and seems to give the best results, but even here there are many choices - from shop lights to plant lights to grow carts. It's a matter of choice.

Grow-Lux. Cool White and Warm White bulbs produce terrific results, whether used alone or in combination. I have used a combination of one Cool White and one Warm White bulb and have been pleased with the results. Usually it's a matter of taste and personal preference.

A plant light will give you a more even distribution of light over a plant shelf rather than a shop light which tends to concentrate all of its light in the middle of the shelf. Four foot 40 watt bulbs produce a greater area of light than two-foot bulbs. The amount of light produced is greater in the center of the bulb than at the ends where much less light is produced. Four-foot bulbs are also less expensive.

Regardless of the type of lighting you use, a beautifully grown, symmetrical plant can be grown in either natural light or artificial light. To promote good symmetry in natural light, your plant should be turned a 1/4 turn at least a couple of times per week, sometimes more often depending upon the season. With artificial light, plants may also need to be turned occasionally, especially if they are grown toward the end of the light fixture.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: SENIOR JUDGES

Meredith Hall • (254) 896-2397 • *Email:* mhall@worldissue.com

Senior Judges may apply for a renewal examination between May 1 and September 1, 2005. Send request to **Meredith Hall, P.O. Box 370, Marlin, TX 76661. Include check for $5.00, (payable to AVSA)** and **proof of three blue ribbons** as per AVSA Handbook, page 83 or S&J Column, AVM, Jan/Feb 2001, page 38. Allow three weeks for delivery. The completed examination must be returned before October 1, 2005 for grading. **Examinations may be received by e-mail attachment of a Microsoft Word document if requested.**

Those Advanced Judges who meet the requirements and wish to apply for their first Senior Judge examination, send check for $5.00 (payable to AVSA) to Mrs. Hall. Also send the following items of documentation of eligibility per AVSA Handbook.

1. List of all judging schools attended, grades, etc.;
2. Signed schedules of five AVSA shows judged, (copy of signed title page with all show information is sufficient);
3. Verification of three blue ribbons earned per AVSA Handbook and S&J Column (AVM-Jan/Feb 2001).

Allow three weeks for delivery. Schedules and cards will be returned if a SASE is included with proper amount of postage. Applications postmarked after September 1, 2005 will be returned, and application may be made next year.

No exams will be returned until after October 15, 2005. Please include E-mail address, and you will be notified of receipt of exam, or include a self addressed postcard and it will be returned upon arrival of exam.

AVSA Building Maintenance Fund

Susan Hapner • 35 Ridge Point Dr. • Chesterfield, MO. 63017

Email: hapnersb@aol.com

Donations Received

January 2005

Margaret H. Adair $5.00
Janeen Dougherty 10.00
Ted Kantner 5.00
Kim A. Massar 25.00
Millie Dellarco 1.00
First Austin AV Society 25.00
In Memory of Paula Foster
Mid-Polk AV Society 392.15
Mid-Polk AV Society disbanded
Kyle Hedberg 5.00
Ron & Jan Davidson 50.00
In Memory of Paula Foster, a very dear friend
First Nighter AV Society, Dallas, TX 25.00
In Memory of Mary Walbrick
First Nighter AV Society, Dallas, TX 25.00
In Memory of James R. Nicholas
Meredith M. Hall 10.00
In Memory of Mary Walbrick
North Texas AV Judges Council, TX 30.00
In Memory of Paula Foster, Anna Padgett, Mary Walbrick
First AV Society of Dallas, TX 25.00
In Memory of Mary Walbrick
Bill Foster $50.00
In Memory of Mary Walbrick, a loyal and dear friend
TOTAL $683.15

February 2005

Karen Plourde $100.00
Jerry Geers 20.00
In Memory of Paula Foster and Keitha Jean Dirickson
G. T. Smith 25.00
Sheryl J. Farlin 25.00
Richard Curry 5.00
Mrs. Ruth O. Wack 5.00
Cassandra Jane Gaunt 1.00
Diane O'Shaughnessy 10.00
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Elinor Skelton $5.00
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Ruth Lindquist 2.00
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Judy Walton 5.00
Donald L. Mayer 10.00
African Violet Society of South Bay 25.00
Martha & Byron Turner 25.00
In Memory of Mary Walbrick
Alpha African Violet Society 50.00
In Memory of Paula Foster
First African Violet Society of Denton 25.00
In Memory of James Robert Nicholas
Corpus Christi African Violet Society 25.00
In Memory of Mary Walbrick
First African Violet Society of Wichita Falls 125.00
In Loving Memory of Mary Walbrick
TOTAL $638.00

Boyce Edens Research Fund

Marlene J. Buck • 17235 N. 106th Avenue • Sun City, AZ 85373-1958

Donations received from December 1, 2004 – January 31, 2005

Emerald Necklace AVC, Boston, MA . . . $70.00
In memory of Medeline C. Sykes, sister of John Cook of Cape Cod Violetry
Stephanie Garko, San Antonio, TX 5.00
Betty E. Curry, Rivervale, NJ 5.00
Jane Sherman, Westport, CT 10.00
Anonymous donor, Providence, RI. 25.00
Janeen Dougherty, Morristown, NJ 10.00
Anun Numboonnam, Nonthaburi, Thailand 2.50
Millie Dellarco, Leesburg, FL 1.00
Ventura County AVS, Ojai, CA $10.00
Judges Council of Southern CA 25.00
In memory of Marie K. Ito
Montgomery AVS, Montgomery, AL 15.00
Delaware African Violet & Gesneriad Society, Wilmington, DE 20.00
In memory of Paula Foster
The African Violet Society, South Bay, Redwood City, CA. 25.00
Vancouver African Violet & Gesneriad Society, Richmond, BC, Canada 40.00
Silvermine AVS, Westport, CT $20.00
In appreciation of a wonderful program presented by Nancy Gilson
London AVS, London, ON, Canada 1.00
Victoria J. Hartman, San Mateo, CA 5.00
Ethel Spurlin, Mililana, HI 5.00
Karen Plourde, Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 100.00
Florence Schnaufer, Baldwin, NY 5.00
Pat Fawcett, Phoenix, AZ 25.00
Cassandra Jane Gaunt, San Bruno, CA 1.00

AVSA Booster Fund

Shirley Berger • 4343 Schumacher Rd-196E • Sebring, FL 33872

Contributions: December 1, 2004 – January 31, 2005

Ann D. Gramstorff, Spring Hill, FL. $5.00
Christel Collier, Lakeland, FL 5.00
Diana Adamo, Long Beach, NY 2.00
Barbara D. Taswell-Miller, Raleigh, NC . . 25.00
Missouri Valley AV Council, Carl Junction, MO 25.00
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Shirley Berger, Sebring, FL 25.00
Elizabeth Burke, Providence, NJ. 5.00
Jack Record, North Bay, NY 25.00
Margie Scott, Richmond, VA 5.00
Marilyn Grender, Blacksburg, VA $5.00
Mid-Polk AVS, Winter Haven, FL. 10.00
In memory of Lois Rubush, member Jean Adams' mother
Ohio State AVS, Yellow Springs, OH. . . 100.00
In memory of Emilie Savage
Mid-Polk AVS, Winter Haven, FL. 392.15
Sharon E. Johnson, Lino Lakes, MN . . . 10.00
In memory of Paula Foster
Janeen Daugherty, Morristown, NJ 10.00
Millie Dellarco, Leesburg, FL 1.00
Sweet Water AVS, Bay Shore, NY. $15.00
Victoria J. Hartman, San Mateo, CA 5.00
New York State AVS, Albany, NY 25.00
AVS of Rochester, Newark, NY. 20.00
Bakersfield AVS, Bakersfield, CA 50
Ethel Spurlin, Mililani, HI 10.00
Cynthia Crater, Colorado Springs, CO 5.00
Chris Wright, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada . . . 11.25
Ventura County AVS, Ojai, CA 10.00
AVS of South Bay, Redwood City, CA. . . 25.00
TOTAL $776.90

Showcase

Optimara Van Gogh

Exhibited by: **Louise McPherson**
Hybridized by: **Holtkamp**
Standard

Winston J. Goretsky

Winston J. Goretsky

Chirita 'Cynthia'

Exhibited by: **Bill Price**

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Barbara Ann

Exhibited by: **William Sugg**
Hybridized by: **K. Stork**
Standard

Winston J. Goretsky

Satin Wine, Optimara Ontario, Ode to Beauty

Exhibited by: **Tony Hellerman**

Violet "Fatigue"

by Marie Montague

After growing, showing, and selling African violets, I've suddenly come down with *Violet "Fatigue."* I know this has happened to others, but it is a new experience for me. This can occur when:

• New England has just experienced the "Blizzard of 2005." We in New England like to brag about the amount of snow we have and name our storms. There were 30+ inches of snow on my lawn and 4 ft. drifts. When it was snowing, I was worried that the lights would go out and all my plants would die at one time (this would certainly reduce my collection to a manageable level). Could I possibly tent my living room and carry hundreds of my plants upstairs near the fireplace to prevent them from freezing? During a previous power outage in the Northeast, a club member actually placed her plants near her gas stove and kept her dryer running to keep the plants warm.

• The relative humidity in your home drops to 30 (usually above 55) and your large plants need water every three days (my wicking containers contain three inches of water). The leaves on my trailers and species were drooping over the pots and were continually calling out, "water me next." There was no time to let gallon containers of water sit over night (to reduce chlorine and other chemicals in tap water); for weeks I was watering right from the faucet. Because the house was so dry, the elastics on my Eliza rings all seemed to break at one time.

• You are the only person you know who doesn't occasionally have a manicure. Why bother, when your hands are always in soil and bleach, and your right thumb is permanently stained from soil. You can never accept or have fresh flowers in the house because they might contain thrips. And, worst of all, you've just spilled a little bleach on your laundry pile and it landed, not on your white towels, but on your brand new pair of green cords. This is after you have been so careful to wear only grubby, bleach-stained sweats when planting.

• If the above isn't bad enough, you feel a little guilty because you haven't repotted, groomed, or set a leaf in months. Too many other things have kept you busy particularly during the holiday season. The annual show is coming up, and there is a good chance you'll have nothing to enter. Of course, all club meetings have been cancelled because of bad weather.

How does one overcome this? You must step back and determine why you are growing African violets in the first place. Is it because of the wonderful people that you have met over the years, or the satisfaction you receive at creating something really beautiful? Receiving a blue ribbon or special award at your annual show only affirms that you have really done something special.

One must then determine how many hours a week can be devoted to violets. Take a look at the upcoming shows that you plan to attend. How many plants that you have will be "blue ribbon" plants, and how many plants will you sell? If the list is too long, reduce the pressure on yourself by cutting down. For some of us, it's a constant battle to cut down on the number of plants we grow. I can only offer suggestions, since I've only been marginally successful myself. One thing that is working for me is to carefully look at each new plant when in bloom to see if it's something to keep. If not, in the barrel it goes. Don't even consider for a future plant sale because you will spend months watering plants you don't like. I've also had luck in cutting down on the number of large plants on my stands. One large 'Ellie Gardner' and a set leaf is enough to preserve this variety in my collection.

To bring things into perspective, any hobby that you really like requires time on your part. If you are a golfer, you will spend many hours alone perfecting your game. If you are a marathon runner, you might "hit the wall" on a lonely hill before you succeed. A good friend breeds West Highland Terriers. Just imagine caring for 5 or 6 barking puppies that are constantly under foot for two months. It's no different when growing violets – you will spend many hours, often alone. At least violets don't bark and wander throughout the house. Our hobby is just a little different from others; you can't walk away from plants for weeks at a time. They require constant attention.

Just one suggestion, don't mention to family or friends that you are tired because you have to water or groom your plants. Your family or friends get bored and will only comment, "we are sick of hearing about violets, if it tires you so much give them up." Only another "violet person" can understand the variables in growing plants and the frustration of having to cram many tasks in a short period of time. Did you ever go to a club meeting and have someone state that all their plants have been repotted, all their grooming has been done, and their plants are really beautiful, in full bloom and ready for show? Would we even like this person?

Suddenly you wake up one morning and can see your lawn, the humidity is back up to 55, most of your plants have survived, and club meetings have resumed. You are back on track and energized. The annual show is only two months away, and there are a few of your plants that look promising. You are not watering plants every day and can actually get your hands in the wonderful soil and start repotting and grooming. This is the time to sympathize with growers in the southern states because "mother nature" will catch up with them during the long, hot days of summer when their air conditioning might break down.

Moving Plants Across Country

by Bob Clark

As most of the members realize, I am newly relocated in Seattle, Washington as of September 1, 2004, from my home in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Even though the move was planned far in advance, getting packed and getting a house sold was rather stressful.

I had made two previous trips to Seattle to check out the city and to scout around. With my living arrangements already determined, I knew I could bring plants with me that could be watched until my relocation was complete. On both trips, I packed and brought as many suitcases as the airlines would permit: two checked bags with clothes, shoes, etc. and two carry-on bags. Each time, I packed one large carry-on with plants. I lined the suitcase with dry cleaning plastic before packing the plants. Then, after letting them dry out for a couple of days to promote flexibility to reduce breakage, I packed miniatures and semi-miniatures intact in their pots into Zip Lock bags and blew air in before sealing to cushion them. (Standard plants I had more of a difficult time with, and saved them for the big move to come.) I packed as many plants in that suitcase as I could fit in. Indeed, packing it tightly was good for the plants because there was no room to move. Upon reaching my destination, I was able to unpack them and set them in natural light to adjust to their new surroundings. All plants that were transported this way made the trip fine. Broken leaves? Yes, but that is part of the process, and of course those broken leaves went down into potting mix as a bumper, just in case I lost more to come.

As the big moving day approached and I was finishing packing boxes, I had to figure out how to get the remaining plants to Seattle. I still had far too many to bring with me on the airplane. When I figured I had to have the moving company actually move several boxes of plants, I lost hope of ever seeing them alive again, but hoped for the best. The moving company said that it would be about a week before the truck was to arrive in Seattle, so I thought they would be fine for that amount of time without light or extra water. I procured three long, thick styrofoam cases used for transporting flowers or seafood, which I knew would protect the plants from temperature damage. Now I had to tackle the problem of my standard plants, Begonias, and larger Gesneriads. I started by packing the larger plants. I used the same method as before with one difference. I unpotted the plants from their pots. This made the plants much happier and were much easier to pack in a row. I used large gallon sized Zip Lock bags for packing these. I made sure the soil was only slightly damp because I didn't want them to rot. The foliage was sure to get dirty, but when I would unpack the plants and repot them, I would give them a nice healthy bath. I packed these containers full and tightly, as well.

Another problem arose: I had two trays of leaf cuttings in propagation trays with transparent domes atop. I had already packed the plants, and there was no more room for these trays! Fortunately, I found two cardboard boxes which fit the trays very tightly. I taped the tops on to the trays, hoping they wouldn't get too jostled...and once again, hoped for the best.

When moving day arrived, I was aghast when the movers arrived in a truck far too small to handle all my furniture and boxes. They said that it "should" all fit. Rather than worry about it, I just let them do their work and continued to finish the job of packing and getting ready to leave the next day. A couple of hours later, I went down to check out the truck and see how the movers were doing. Now I was glad that I had packed those boxes so tightly; the movers had the boxes in all kinds of odd ways; upside-down, sideways...(oh the pain...the pain...). Nothing to do now but wait and see how they fared when I unpacked them the next week.

After arriving in Seattle the next day, I had a chance to get the home ready for the moving truck which I expected in a few days. Unfortunately, a few days drew out to be almost four weeks. After many angry and frustrating calls, the moving van finally arrived. I was not really anxious about the plants, figuring most of them were dead after being enclosed that long in the dark and without water, so I just let the men work and they unloaded very efficiently and quickly. After their departure, I took stock of everything, and started to look for the boxes of plants and the styrofoam "coffins," holding what I was sure to be black goo in bags.

The first box I came across was one of the ones with the leaf cuttings. I opened it with a bit of trepidation, and sliced the tape off, revealing wonderful, lush little baby plants on sturdy leaves. A few of the leaves had rotted, but most were intact and alive! Wonderful! Apparently, they were unaffected by the long period of darkness.

Then I rearranged many boxes to get to those large styrofoam ones. I sliced the packing tape off, and, to my great surprise, the plants inside showed some signs of life! Most of the African violets actually made the trip quite well. Several of the fussy ones and species, however, were lost in the whole melodrama. Most of the Gesneriads made the trip well, save for the epiphytic genera, like *Nematanthus*, *Aeschynanthus*, and columneas. Without light, all of these defoliated, and upon unpacking, had become black sticks. Begonias fared poorly, as well.

Now that the whole moving experience is behind me and the light stands are up and running and I have joined the Seattle African Violet Society, I have restocked, and my plants are back and hopefully adjusting to their new environment. The growing conditions here are very different, and I have to adjust my routine quite a bit to accommodate this. In Lawrence, the plant stands were in a cool damp basement. Here, they are in a second floor bedroom that is very well insulated. With the lights on, it gets very warm, and I have to water quite a bit more regularly.

All in all, the move is over, despite many problems, and I am very happy it is. I am getting settled and, enjoying my plants once again, and getting accustomed to this lovely part of the United States. If you are planning on visiting the Pacific Northwest or Seattle area, please drop me a line, and I would love to visit.

Showcase

Winston J. Goretsky

Rob's Soliloquy

Exhibited by: **Jim Toms**
Hybridized by: **Ralph Robinson**
Miniature

Winston J. Goretsky

Kiwi Dazzler

Exhibited by: **D. Snell**
Standard

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Rob's Miriwinni

Exhibited by: **Doris Morris**

Hybridized by: **Ralph Robinson**

Semiminiature Trailer

Vintage Violets Win the Show

by Sharon Kemp

The time: October 29th, 2004. The place: Owego, New York. In the showroom at the New York State AVS Convention, it was deja vu all over again.

Taking centre stage as Best in Show at this year's event was none other than 'Blue Boy', a splendidly floriferous specimen grown to the size of a Studebaker hubcap by Bruno Curcuruto. Beside it on the Court of Honor as winner of Second Best in Show, was Paul Kroll's superb plant of 'Neptune'. In the words of hybridizer John Brownlie, "It doesn't get more vintage than that."

Indeed, it was enough to bring a tear to the eye of vintage violet fans everywhere. And for hobbyists across North America who love these golden oldies and work fiercely to keep them in the public eye, it was a sweet double victory. What more tangible evidence could there be to convince those who tend to overlook (dare we speculate, even compost) their vintage plants to make way for the parade of new hybrids, that older sometimes really is better - or, at the very least, just as good?

"I was thrilled to see that two vintage violets stole the show," says Nancy Ley, of Violets-O-Ley in Mississauga, Ontario. "I find that it often takes a knowledgeable grower or collector to appreciate the early varieties, because some of them simply don't have the abundance of bloom of many of the new hybrids. But they are truly regal."

The big winners in Owego, 'Blue Boy' and 'Neptune', are illustrious members of the "Original Ten", the first group of hybrid violets released back in 1935 by Armacost and Royston of California. Most of today's hobbyists have never seen, let alone grown, the other members of this legendary band, plants such as 'Mermaid', 'Commodore', 'Norseman', and 'Sailor Boy', although 'Admiral' and 'Viking' do crop up with greater frequency. Commercial suppliers occasionally feature Original Ten varieties on their lists; John and Barbara Cook of Cape Cod Violetry in Massachusetts have done their part to keep history alive by carrying the Original Ten for many years.

In the decades following the introduction of the Original Ten, a steady succession of gifted and determined hybridizers worked to come up with new and different varieties, quick to take advantage of the sports that dramatically expanded the possibilities for new and different plants. The variegated foliage of 'Tommie Lou', white edge of 'Lady Geneva', and the first double flower which appeared on a sport of 'Blue Boy' were all milestones in the history of African violet hybridization, providing fuel for the efforts of (among others) Lyndon Lyon, Ethel Champion, Frank and Anne Tinari, and Ernest Fisher.

"Mention an early hybridizer and chances are someone in the world is still growing at least one of their varieties," notes John Brownlie. "They may or may not surface at a show or convention, but those plants are still enjoyed in their homes."

Brownlie notes that a number of well-known hybridizers of the 1970s and '80s, including June Swift, Pat Tracey, Ronn Nadeau, and Hortense Pittman (who continues to be active), created plants that have already taken their place in the "vintage" category, having been listed or registered for at least 25 years. Some of his own introductions will earn that distinction over the next few years.

"A number of my hybrids were introduced in the early 1980s," he says. "'Aca's Eye Knees', 'Aca's Wewonchu', 'Aca's Johnny Redcoat', and 'Aca's Margaret Joan' will be vintage violets before much longer."

John and Doris Brownlie consistently grow the golden oldies of which they remain fond, including 'Granger's Wonderland', 'Happy Harold', and several hybrids introduced by the late Max Maas. The latter happen to be particular favorites of AVSC President, Jim Toms.

"I don't actively collect vintage violets," Toms says, "but I always have a few. The very best standards that I have in the vintage category are all Max Maas hybrids, namely 'Becky', 'Jean', and 'Mark'. They are all classics and make great show plants. I wouldn't hesitate to put a good specimen of any of these into competition with current-day hybrids because they have it all: good color, good blossom count, nice leaves, and good symmetry. My favorite among these is 'Jean'. A well-grown plant of 'Jean' will still get "oohs" and "aahs"."

Toms notes that Mark, a dark red that was a show-stopper for many years, has been largely eclipsed (along with the rest of the older purple-red varieties) by the popularity of the cinnamon reds and corals that have appeared over the past decade. Of the older variegates, his favorite is 'Tommie Lou', although he feels that in general vintage variegates have a hard time stacking up to their modern counterparts.

Nancy Ley is another grower whose list of old favorites is topped by a Maas variety. "I love 'The King'," says Ley, whose other vintage favorite is Harold Reinhardt's 'Nancy Reagan.' "It's a beautiful double blossom, a very dark purple. A wonderful plant."

In the category of vintage miniature and semiminiature varieties, the pickings are admittedly slim. As Jim Toms points out, it took hybridizers a long time to develop genuinely good specimens. One variety cited by both Toms and John Brownlie as a winner is the widely-grown 'Beginner's Luck.'

"It was one of the first semis to really be a show plant, and not be plagued by problems of asymmetry, poor blossom count, and suckering," Toms explains. "It still makes a great show plant, outside vintage classes as well as in them."

Trailers are an integral part of the vintage violet picture, and none is more prolific or well-known than the time-honored 'Pixie Blue'. "How many times have you seen 'Pixie Blue' in the trailer class at a show?" asks Jim Toms, who admits to having three examples in his own plant room. "It's still on show tables everywhere and deservedly so. It's easy to grow, not fussy about its surroundings."

That comparative ease of care may, in the final analysis, be the key to survival for many of the vintage varieties. As most growers will readily admit, good looks aren't everything. New or old, plants that are consistently difficult to please often find their way to the waste bin in favor of their more easy going relatives. Plants like Tiger, French Lilac, Chanticleer, Wisteria, Hand Picked, and P.T. Burma Ruby remain part of the scene, in part, because of their ability to adapt to a wide range of growing conditions - not to mention growers' abilities.

"I often find that the vintage varieties are more tolerant of abuse," observes Nancy Ley. "They frequently cope better with inconsistent watering, for example. That's one of the reasons I hope growers will continue to find space on their shelves for these plants, so that we never lose them. They've played a big part in African violet history."

From *Chatter*, publication of the AVS of Canada

SUMMER GROWING

by Sheila Walton and Pam Kennedy

As summer approaches, we need to think of some of the problems our African violets may encounter and how we can help them. Hotter weather will mean that plants need more water. If you are not already using the wick-watering method, you may find that now is a good time to start. By having a reservoir containing your fertilized water, your plants will have a good supply. This is also very useful if you are going away on holiday as your plants will be able to look after themselves. There are commercial self-watering containers that are attractive, or you may use any container that can hold water and has a lid on which your plant can stand with the wick going through a hole in the lid. If you are able to have a container that does not allow light to penetrate, this will stop the growth of algae. Check your plants regularly to ensure they have water in the reservoirs, but also check to see that the wicks are sucking up water. It does sometimes happen that the wick dries and stops taking up water. If this happens, stand the plant in a saucer of water for a few minutes to restart the process.

Plants need light to grow and flower, but they do not need direct sun that could easily burn the leaves. Protect your plants by using a sheer curtain, blind, or by moving them out of the direct sun. Remember to continue to turn your plants, especially if you are growing in natural light, to prevent them from developing a one-sided lean.

Keeping plants and us cool through a Melbourne, Australia, summer can sometimes be a challenge! Not everyone has built in air conditioners, and often they are not in the particular room in which your plants reside. Most of us have either blinds or curtains that can be closed to keep some of the heat out. If you are growing under lights, you can reduce some of the heat stress on your plants by turning the lights off on the hottest day as there is a considerable amount of heat generated by the lights. Some of you will by now be thinking that your plants will suffer by not getting the normal amount of light they are used to, but we do not often get long periods of days in the mid to high 100s.

Many of us have fans, and placing a fan in the same room as your plants will help circulate the air which can have a slight cooling effect. It is advisable not to have the fan blowing directly on your plants, but in a position where it can circulate the air around the room. Ceiling fans are great for this.

You can also help your plants by misting them with very hot water. This may sound strange, but if you put very hot water in a spray bottle and spray, by the time the water reaches your plant, it is lukewarm.

Spraying also raises humidity and provides the extra moisture that your plants love.

From the *Newsletter* of the
Early Morn African Violet Group, Australia

Showcase

Rebel's Midnight Mauve

Exhibited by: **William Sugg**
Hybridized by: **R. Bann**
Standard

Winston J. Goretsky

Winston J. Goretsky

Streptocarpus 'Bristol's Luv It'

Exhibited by: **Tony Hullerman**

Photo Credit: **Winston J. Goretsky**

Rebel's Splatter Kake

Exhibited by: **Doris Brownlie**
Hybridized by: **R. Bann**
Large

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"Summertime, and..."

"the livin' is easy." is the next part of that line. Summer is not so hard on the 'livin' now that we have air conditioning, but humidity can still be a problem. The correct humidity is one of the "Ten Propers" that AVSA recommends for growing African violets. African violets grow best if the humidity is between 40 and 70 percent.

HUMIDITY

Most of us grow our African violets, not in greenhouses, but in our homes so the humidity may vary from winter to summer. If you have a humidifier on your furnace for the winter, the higher humidity will help not only you feel better but your plants will do better, also. Humidity that is too low is a problem, and really dry air can cause bud drop. Too much can cause problems with mildew on the leaves and, depending on how you water, your plants may suddenly seem to be too wet.

To help raise the humidity, group your plants together and put them on trays with pebbles if you are not already mat watering on trays. Many good growers also mist their plants to help raise the humidity and foliar feed at the same time.

SPACE

Good air circulation and adequate spacing between plants can help prevent the spread of pests and diseases. Give your plants room to grow to get really good symmetry for your show plants. If you have really high humidity, a dehumidifier may be the answer and will help your air conditioning bill, also! Run a fan to help with circulation around your plants. I know very good growers who say that is what they do to prevent powdery mildew.

TEMPERATURE

It is hard to separate the requirements for growing good African violets. Temperature, watering, and spacing go together and can be best addressed together. As the temperature goes up, in general, the humidity should rise. Some of the 'other gesneriads' prefer a lower temperature than African violets, but they still do not want to be in an overly dry atmosphere, and some may need to be grown in a covered container. There are some, like episcias, that like it warm and very humid. As we tell the public at shows and sales, where temperature is concerned, if you are happy, your plants are happy. Some of the 'other gesneriads' do prefer a cooler growing environment. Some *Streptocarpus* and *Sinningias*, for example, do well, if not better, when the temperature is cool.

WATER

Watering is an important part of growing African violets, and the method you use is probably determined by how many plants you have and what your growing circumstance is, whether indoors in a bedroom or part of the dining room, a basement, or in a greenhouse.

Many people use the 'constant feed' program for fertilizer and add fertilizer to the water. Use tepid water whenever you are watering. Helen Van Pelt Wilson's African Violet Book states that if the water is 10 degrees above or below the room temperature, leaf spotting may occur even though not one drop of water touches the foliage.

If you mat water, wick water, use Texas potting, or water individually from the top or bottom, remember that both over-watering and under-watering can cause the plant to wilt. Check to see what the problem is before you act!

The water from the tap, in most cases, is at or close to a neutral pH. Occasionally, however, there are water systems with a pH that is not neutral, and your water may be too acid or too alkaline. It would not hurt to check the pH of your water as well as checking the pH of your soil mix.

SOIL

There are almost as many recipes for soil mix as there are for pound cake. Some people like to try new things, and others prefer to stick with the old tried and true. The "standard mix" is 3 parts peat, 2 parts vermiculite, and 1 part perlite, with dolomite lime added. One thing to remember, dolomite lime acts slowly to change the pH of the soil, so it is better to try to mix your soil in advance.

Many people who are watering on mats and/or wicks with constant feed fertilizer are using a lighter mix, more like a 1-1-1. The pH of the soil should be slightly acid - about 6.5 to 6.7.

If you are not happy with how your plants are growing, try a different soil mix. Ask someone who grows beautiful African violets what mix they use and, also, ask what their growing conditions are like. Find someone with conditions similar to yours and try the mix they use. I am amazed at the list of ingredients in some soil mixes but am also impressed

with the results in their African violets. There are growers who use a simple mix and have beautiful African violets. I think that is part of the charm of African violets, they do well in a variety of circumstances as long as you are close to giving them what they need.

Some growers recommend that you 'lime drench' your plants. Others will take each plant and pour plain water through the soil and then let it drain. The lime drench is the same except dolomite lime has been added to the water. Both are to remove salts from the soil if they are building up and to keep the pH from getting too low. I have, however, heard one excellent grower and hybridizer say that she never does this, but instead, repots on a regular schedule and therefore does not need to do this. The awards she has won certainly testify to her success. The choice to avoid the problem of salt buildup and low pH is yours... repot fairly frequently or drench those plants, individually.

LIGHT

A frequent question at our shows/sales is, "Why doesn't my violet bloom? It grows and is healthy looking." Lack of light is possibly the answer for many of these people who are not growing under fluorescent lights. Here in the south, an east window is fine, but west windows are usually too hot and bright for the African violets.

Most of us, though, grow our plants using fluorescent lights. The 40 watt four foot fixture is the type that most seem to use, although some have eight foot lights. The longer bulbs have more "bright" growing area than the four foot fixtures as the light, as far as the plants are concerned, is not as bright at the ends. There are several things to remember about lights: the distance from the light to the plant, how long the lights are on, how bright are the bulbs, and what type of bulb are they.

Some growers change the bulbs in their fixtures on a regular basis; perhaps, one bulb in each fixture every Labor Day or some other day you can remember. Others leave the bulbs in until they burn out. Whichever method you use, remember that the new bulbs are much brighter.

Some growers run their lights for a set period of time and never change the time even for shows. Others will use the length of time the lights are on in order to speed up or slow down the growth/blooming of their violets.

That standard size African violets need to be farther from the lights than miniature and semiminiature violets almost goes without saying. It is difficult to give exact distances because of all the variables: age of bulbs, the type plants being grown, dark green or variegated foliage, young plants, or mature plants being pushed for a show. The one thing they do all need though, is rest. Don't forget to let them have about six to eight hours of darkness.

Many growers use only cool white bulbs, and others use one cool white and one warm white. Some will use the wide spectrum Gro-Lux type bulb and feel that their plants do better with that type of light. All are happy with the results! I have found that seedlings and young plants do seem to grow better under the Gro-Lux type bulb, but I have not been able to tell the difference with large plants.

From The *Dixie News*

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101 Oak Heights Dr. Oakdale, PA 15071
georgena@bellatlantic.net

Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus has been diagnosed in African violets and many other gesneriads. As gesneriad growers, we are facing a major problem. Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus, also known as INSV, has no cure. INSV is carried from plant to plant by Western Flower Thrips. INSV, a tospovirus, (a group of plant viruses now widespread in the greenhouse industry), was first isolated from impatiens so the name will forever be known as such. Ten years ago I stopped growing all impatiens because Phipps Conservatory banned them in order to avoid the virus.

The definition of a virus is: " ...sub microscopic, filterable, infectious bodies too small to be seen with a compound microscope. They have characteristics of both living and nonliving matter. They are nucleoproteins capable of multiplying and acting like living organisms when in specific living plant or animal cells."

Any plant with this virus must be destroyed. Not just on a compost heap, but bagged and sent to the landfill because outdoor plants may be invaded. Viruses can live on shelves, tools, and pots in a dry state for years. INSV grows rapidly when the temperature is above 75 degrees because it originated in the subtropics. INSV is a widespread plant virus and has been confirmed in more than 600 kinds of ornamental plants.

TESTS

The symptoms of INSV look exactly like many other maladies. **Diagnosis can only be done BY SPECIAL TEST OR IN A LAB.**

If you want to perform your own test, there are kits available from Cape Cod Violetry. (Their address is Dept. AV, 28 Minot St., Falmouth, MA 02540. Phone (508) 548-2798 or Fax (508) 450-5427). INSV kits contain everything you need to do the test. The test uses an antigen/antibody reaction to find virus particles in the tissue. More than one virus may be present in the same plant.

As for outside testing, contact your local university or agricultural agent. In Pennsylvania contact Gary W. Moorman, Professor of Plant Pathology, Penn State University, Dept. of Plant Pathology, 111 Buckhout Lab, University Park, PA 16802-4506. There may be a charge. This lab does tests for growers in PA. Contact your local university to see if they offer this test service. A pathology lab or agricultural agent may be able to help.

SYMPTOMS

Although we cannot visually diagnose INSV, there are symptoms and patterns that give us a very good clue. In African violets the symptoms can be "bull's-eye" spots in a light color anywhere on the leaves. Leaves can cup down and pucker at the margins. The entire leaf can be covered with rings and patterns. Light green lines and circle patterns can cover the entire plant or just one small part of a leaf. Arch designs resembling an unfinished circle may be present. Brown necrotic streaks, pits, or spots may develop. Yellow streaks along veins may show up, and centers may be stunted. The underside of leaves may develop a white, lighter green, or red mottled coloration that may have a silvery pattern created by the thrips. Sometimes, INSV will only be visible on the underside of the leaves and may resemble color change, such as white, light green, and red mottling when the top of the leaf shows no symptoms.

Other gesneriads can be infected with INSV and may have a different set of symptoms. For example, gloxinias may have a dark brown watercolor stain on each leaf. One scientist told me that he first saw the virus on chiritas and it looked obvious - the usual "bull's eye" pattern of concentric wavy lines of dark green and pale green colors. Yet, another *Chirita* had completely bizarre necrotic patterns.

Unfortunately, these symptoms of INSV look just like the following: Mites and thrips damage, cold water on foliage, nutritional deficiency, low temperatures, over-fertilizing, crown-rot, poor watering practices, high or low pH, water softener damage, or just bad culture.

CONTROLLING THRIPS

I realize that some web sites say other insects can carry virus, and they can, but those are **other** viruses, not INSV.

Western Flower Thrips, hereon known as WFT, are responsible for spreading most of this virus. THRIPS must be controlled. WFT arrived on the growing scene in the 1980's and so did INSV, ravaging many glasshouse crops. **A product called Conserve, with the active ingredient Spinosad, came along recently and is the absolute best and most dependable control of WFT.** (Cape Cod Violetry has Conserve available. Their address was given earlier.) According to one site, at least two applications, five days apart and perhaps a follow-up 5-7 days later, may be in order. Follow directions exactly.

WFT spread the INSV while feeding on plant tissue. Saliva is injected into the plant tissue as they rasp, spreading the virus through the new tissue in less than thirty minutes. Only two stages of the thrips reproduction can acquire the virus, but adults seem able to pass the virus through their salivary fluid.

I have tried biological controls against WFT without success. The beneficial insects from my integrated pest management program were expensive, and they did not live up to expectations. So, I don't depend on integrated pest management to control WFT. Some growers place blue or yellow sticky cards near an "indicator" plant. Indicator plants are plants favored by the WFT and INSV that give "first-response" symptoms of the virus. Petunia 'Calypso' and *Gloxinia* are commonly used. **If WFT show up, it is time to spray Conserve.** One well-known hybridizer uses episcias as an indicator plant. They show damage from INSV within a few days. The symptoms on *Episcia* are: New growth dies back rapidly in a brown, dry color, dry brown spots may be on foliage. Stolens and stems develop sunken, dry, brown pitted patches and the plant dies back completely.

ISOLATE

ISOLATE INDIVIDUALLY each and every new cutting or plant and INSPECT your complete collection every week or so. DO NOT jump to a conclusion that you have INSV without a positive test that confirms its presence. It may take many months after invasion for the INSV to be visible, if ever. If you find a plant that is suspect, either toss it or separate it with complete barrier. If the color in the flower has a "break", that means it is off-color, and may be deformed, isolate instantly. If you suspect mites may be involved, you can spray it once a week for two weeks inside a plastic bag with a miticide. Keep the plant isolated. If there is no improvement, toss the plant, pot and all, and wash your hands and anything that touched the plant tissue. No plant ever outgrows a virus attack

Again, DO NOT jump to a conclusion that you have INSV without a positive test that confirms its presence. The trouble with a suspect plant may be something else that is not fatal, such as cultural problems.

If you have had a plant for a while and it is not thriving, be suspicious. Plants infected with the virus are very weak, prone to root rot, and other insects will invade them first. If your plants are diagnosed with INSV through testing, you must discard the entire plant and consider that other plants in your collection have the virus. There is a chance that any plantlet grown from this plant will also have the virus. Do not attempt to save the plant by taking leaf cuttings. INSV is not like other viruses that invade the entire plant, it may settle in only one small isolated part of a plant. It is best not to take the chance.

If you are like me and cannot spray chemicals, individual barriers are your only natural control. Cover, contain, bag, and tray your entire collection so that thrips can't get to your plants. Cover plant stands with plastic. There are many covers for plant trays, available in different sizes. Use lots of plastic bags in every size. I have wrapped my big plants in Saran Wrap. If you do have plants that are suspect, enclosing them will isolate the spread as well as keep thrips away. Wear gloves when you repot. Dip the gloves in a 10% Clorox solution between every plant. Clorox will kill a virus. Dip tools and even the tip of your watering can in the solution. Clorox must be mixed every few hours as it becomes less effective with age. Wash trays, pots, matting, and benches with this solution. One of our best vendors says she has heard of dipping new leaves in alcohol and rinsing them in warm water just to help sterilize. That's a good idea.

BE STRONG

We can overcome this virus. Get rid of thrips. Do not do anything rash.

Take your time and make a plan to see if you might have INSV. Isolate everything. Stop trading plants until you know you don't have this virus.

Do not be afraid to buy from our vendors. Several of them test constantly to make sure their stock is virus-free. Some clear out their greenhouses each summer to start fresh stock. They have learned how to win this game.

If a plant does not look good, don't accept it or purchase it. Be smart. Our African violets and gesneriads are worth every growing trial and tribulation. We must act **NOW**. If you have information or photos of this virus, please write or e-mail me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

John Boggan, Leslie Brothers, Thomas Brunning, John Cook, Pat Hancock, Gary Moorman, Paul Sorano, Jeffrey Smith, Dolores O'Sullivan, Libbie Glembocki

"How to Control Plant Diseases In Home and Garden" by Malcolm Shurtleff

http://.ext.colostate.edu/PUBS/GARDEN/02947.html

http://hortipm.tamu.edu/publications/INSV1.html

http://www.umass.edu/umext/floriculture/fact_sheets/pest_management/wft_03.thml

Editor's Note:

I offer my sincere thanks to Georgene Albrecht for writing this article. Many of our members have reported the same symptoms described here, and now they may have an answer. Remember that the only way to POSITIVELY identify this virus is by testing.

Thank you also to the members of the Long Island AVS. Many of the members' African violet collections contracted INSV. Due to the loss of so many plants, they were forced to cancel their spring show. And a special "thank you" to member Delores O'Sullivan, who organized testing and photography of some of the stricken plants so I could share them with you. Each of the plants featured on page 40 tested positive for INSV.

Saintpaulia grotei Protzen

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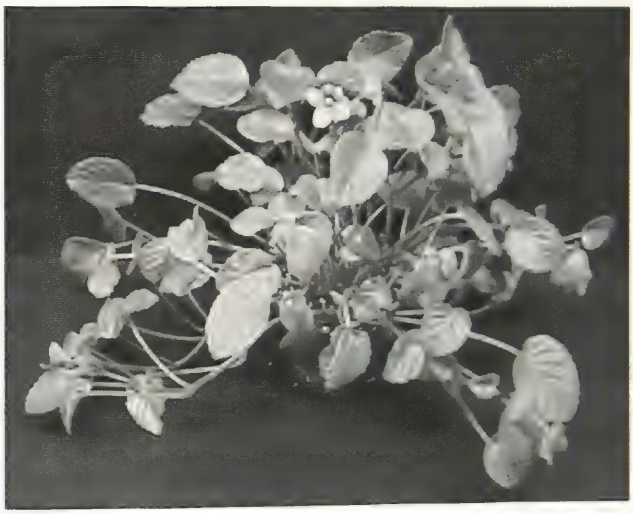

Saintpaulia grotei Protzen is another species clone from the Uppsala Botanical Gardens in Uppsala, Sweden. The records for *S. grotei* Protzen show that it was collected in 1987, but details on the environment and elevation were not given. The collection was made in the East Usambara Mountains in the Muheza District in Tanzania. The collector was G.A. Protzen. The collector's name "Protzen" has been commonly used to identify this clone. Many of the other Uppsala plants have a 3000 number after their clone name. The number for *S. grotei* Protzen is 3091, therefore, an alternate identification for this clone would be *S. grotei* 3091. The specimen record is number 86840 in the Uppsala herbarium. Leaf cuttings were sent to Iowa State University in 1992. I obtained my cutting from ISU in 1996.

S. grotei Protzen is a standard sized trailing plant. The leaves are oval to heart-shaped and usually come to a point at the tip. The leaves are light green and are approximately 3-5 cm (1 1/2 to 2 inches) long and 2-3 cm (1 inch) wide. The leaf blades are shallowly toothed on the lower two thirds of the leaf blade. The leaves have a white to silver reverse. The petioles are reddish and may grow to 3-5 cm in length on the mature leaves, a shorter length as compared to other *S. grotei* clones such as the one from Cape Cod Violetry. The stems have opposite leaves, and the nodes are about 1-3 cm apart. The combination of shorter petiole length and internode spacing results in a compact and tidy plant with few gaps in the foliage presentation. This species has leaf hairs that are appressed to the surface. Both long and short hairs are present. The overall leaf hair formula is long appressed, short appressed (LASA). The leaves are not obviously hairy as compared to other *Saintpaulia* species and have a waxy or plastic appearance.

The flowers of *S. grotei* Protzen are about 1-2 cm in diameter and are found 1-4 per peduncle. The flowers are light blue in color. The peduncles generally support the flowers just above the foliage. This species clone is only moderately floriferous and may have 6-12 open flowers on a flowering stem. Larger plants with multiple stems can be expected to have more flowers.

S. grotei Protzen has been an easy species to grow in my collection. I usually treat it as a warm growing species, but it has also been tolerant of the growing conditions on the lower shelves. The foliage is very attractive, and the plant will make a large trailing specimen easily. However, I have not had a large number of flowers to go with the excellent foliage. I suspect that the plant would produce more flowers with higher humidity and bloom boosting fertilizer treatments. This plant has also been very disease free. I have never observed mildew on this clone, and the leaves do not seem to be damaged by spraying.

I have not used *S. grotei* Protzen in hybridizing, but I feel that it would make an excellent choice for a species to use as a parent in developing standard trailers. The foliage is very attractive, and the plant trails freely and shapes easily for show. The stems are flexible, allowing the plant to hold up in wind if grown outside. The main drawback in this species clone is the low number of flowers. If this plant were crossed with some of the heavily blooming miniature trailers, some excellent large trailers might be developed.

In conclusion, *S. grotei* Protzen is a species clone that will appeal to growers who have space for large trailers. The plant is easy to grow and shapes well on its own. The leaves are not sensitive to spray damage. Growers who have a warm, humid greenhouse would be rewarded in growing this species in a hanging basket.

A Study on Types of Variegation of African Violets

by Nancy Robitaille

Back in the 1950s, there were a few variegated violets around. These were of the type called Spontaneous.

Spontaneous variegation is an undesirable trait in show plants since it is inevitably temporary and irregular, fading away to almost completely green leaves.

Spontaneous variegated violets were not very popular because violet collectors were not satisfied with the performance of the plants. A grower could buy a variegated plant that had all green leaves except for one or two leaves that might have some white variegation in them. Commercial people were not interested in propagating these spontaneous variegated violets because of their instability, and most growers who were interested in showing their plants could not do so with these unstable plants. Judges would have to take many points off a plant that had so many completely green leaves with no variegation so no one wanted to show them.

A popular author of that time, Helen Van Pelt Wilson, had this to say in her book titled *African-Violet Book*, P. 83:

"The Fascinating Problems of Variegation

Why African violets develop variegated leaves and how to propagate variegations remain of major interest to all of us. The condition we see and refer to as variegation is of two kinds, one caused by certain environmental conditions, as soil deficiency or even pot binding, the other, as in girl-type leaves, a true variegation that can be inherited.

When the colored areas on a leaf run into each other and are not sharply defined, plants are usually suffering from a soil deficiency, probably absence of iron or manganese or other trace elements essential to the production of chlorophyll. Streaking in particular may indicate manganese deficiency. Restore balance to the soil, and the "variegated" leaves may die or lose their variegation. It is even possible to starve or pot-bind a plant into greater variegation. Propagate leaves from such variegateds, and all may be green, unless the rooting leaves suffer from the same deficiencies as the parent plants.

True variegation is a mutation. As such it can be transmitted to its seedlings, but genetically the matter is quite complicated. The tendency to be partially or entirely white will be seen in seedlings only if the variegated parent bears the seeds."

... "It is interesting historically that one spring the people at Tinari Greenhouses put to root a row of *S. ionantha* – fifty to seventy-five leaf cuttings – and the plantlets on all of these cuttings, every one, were variegated. The same spring they noticed considerable variegation elsewhere in the greenhouses. The next spring there weren't six variegateds in all, a slight percentage.

From this, it might be concluded that environment brought about variegation."

One example of a plant that had spontaneous variegation was 'DuPont Lavender Pink', AVS48 (notice the early AVSA registration number.) 'DuPont Lavender Pink' was a standard single orchid two tone with Supreme foliage. Supreme leaves are thick, hairy, and quilted with strong pencil-like petioles.

OUR MODERN DAY TYPES OF VARIEGATIONS

In 1959, a grower from the state of Mississippi, 'Tommie Lou' Oden, received a cutting from a very popular plant of the day called 'White Pride'. This was registered as #0872 in the AVSA Registry. It had a double white flower on plain green leaves. Oden planted her leaf as we all do in a pot of good soil and waited for the babies to arrive. When the babies came, she noticed at least one of them had strange white markings. She took special care of this variegated baby, and as soon as it was mature enough to take a leaf for propagation, she did so. Then, as the next babies grew from the leaf – all variegated – she took leaves from these to go to another generation. 'Tommie Lou' continued propagating leaves from her babies for nine generations, and the variegation continued to be produced in the babies.

Oden took her plant to her friends, and they told her she should have it registered and to call it 'Tommie Lou'. This was the first variegated plant registered with AVSA. It was a double white with occasional orchid blush on green and white variegated leaves.

The violet world went crazy and 'Tommie Lou' became a very popular plant.

Hybridizers of the day were astonished and wished to work with this fantastic plant which showed variegation on every leaf and for the most part stayed variegated, unlike the unpopular spontaneous type variegation.

Hybridizers tried to pollinate the flowers of 'Tommie Lou' but gave up in frustration because they believed the plant to be sterile.

Ten years passed when in 1969, a hybridizer, Harold Reinhardt, tried to pollinate 'Tommie Lou'. He finally experimented with the flowers, pealing them back to get a good look at the pistil (female part of the flower which accepts the pollen). He discovered to his amazement that the pistil, instead of sticking straight up and visible, was deformed and bent back upon itself so that it was impossible to pollinate the tip of the pistil. Reinhardt forced the pistil into upright position and pollinated it with pollen from one of his own hybrids, 'Purple Gold'.

In time, a seed pod formed, and when the well-known hybridizer, Lyndon Lyon, visited Reinhardt, he was urged to take some of the seed. Forty-three seedlings were produced, all of them with variegated foliage.

Lyndon Lyon continued to produce new hybrids with variegated foliage in every possible color combination – white, red, blue, pink. There were no yellows then nor were there fantasies. Then years later, he also produced miniatures, semi miniatures, and trailers with this same remarkable foliage.

Today there are literally thousands of variegated hybrids on the market, and most can trace their ancestry back to 'Tommie Lou'.

'Tommie Lou' variegation is simple to produce in hybridizing. It is not, in fact, a genetic trait at all since it is not carried in the plant's chromosomes. Instead, it is carried in the ovary of the mother plant as a defect in the manufacture of chlorophyll and is transmitted to all its offspring as part of the egg itself. To obtain a new variegated hybrid, therefore, one only has to pollinate another variegated plant: all the seedlings produced will be variegated to some degree. On the other hand, if the mother plant has all green leaves, no amount of crossing with the pollen of variegated plants will cause its seedlings to be variegated since only the mother plant can transmit this trait...unless, of course, like Mrs. Oden, the grower is lucky enough to come across a new mutation!

'Tommie Lou' Variegation or TL as it is sometimes indicated in descriptions is unique. The white part of a leaf seems to begin at the edges and works itself into the center. TL Variegation is very popular both with growers and with hybridizers.

Examples of TL Variegation:

'Tommie Lou'-Oden double white/light orchid center. Variegated dark green plain quilted foliage.

CROWN OR CHAMPION VARIEGATION

Crown variegation describes a type of variegation concentrated in the center of the plant or the crown. These center leaves are often entirely cream, yellowish green, or pink while the outer leaves can be entirely green. As the light color of the crown grows and becomes a second row of leaves, its color often changes to darker green.

Some growers prefer this type of variegation, and some hybridizers even specialize in this type of plant. Ethel Champion is one such hybridizer, and she has produced a great many crown-variegated hybrids.

Crown variegation (sometimes called Champion variegation) is more stable than spontaneous variegation and is easily reproduced by leaf cuttings.

MOSAIC VARIEGATION

Mosaic variegation, rather than being concentrated along leaf edges or in new growth, is scattered evenly over the whole leaf surface like a mosaic pattern in ceramics or cut glass windows. This is the most stable of all the four types of variegation and is not affected by changes of temperature or nitrogen content.

Frank and Anne Tinari, well-known hybridizers, introduced a green-leafed plant called 'Lilian Jarret'. This plant mutated and produced a plant called 'Lilian Jarret Supreme'. Again the plant mutated, and this plant was variegated in a new and different way. It was called 'Lilian Jarret Variegated'. This was the first plant with mosaic variegation.

How did Lilian Jarrett or Mosaic variegated foliage come about?

Anne Tinari wrote an article in African Violet Magazine September/October 1988 which contained a lot of information concerning this new and exciting variegation. Tinari said that a botanist who was also a student of genetics informed her that this type of variegated trait can only be inherited maternally, meaning if you wish to hybridize with mosiac foliage, you must use the mosiac foliaged plant as the mother plant.

Registered in 1958, 'Lilian Jarrett' is described as follows: "large, soft baby pink color blossom, plain medium green pointed leaf slightly cupped, color leaf reverse light green to pink to almost white." Its parentage is 'Frilled Rosette' X 'Double Pink'.

'Lilian Jarrett' was named for an adopted aunt, a horticulturist back in the 1940s.

The Tinaris were uncertain about the acceptance of 'Lilian Jarrett' because at that time the craze in the African violet world was for deep double pink cultivars. It did, however, enjoy the number one position on the best 100 list for five years and appeared on the honor list in the African Violet Magazine in 1965.

"After a period of about three years, the plant, all on its own, and quite suddenly, began to show an interesting pattern of variegation in the foliage which has become known as the mosiac or 'Lilian Jarrett' type. The mutation persisted and it became quite evident it was a real genetic trait that hasn't varied over the years."

Tinari advised the registrar to change the description on 'Lilian Jarrett' to read "mosaic". variegation.

In spite of the fact that mosaic variegation was introduced many years ago, only a handful of plants of this type

have been hybridized. Hybridizers believe that this is because Mosaic pattern is linked to a serious genetic defect.

Ethel Champion has been championing this type of variegation for many years and has produced quite a few lovely variegated plants. Another hybridizer well known in our day, our own Dr. Jeff Smith, has hybridized and registered a series of plants with mosaic variegations with alpha name 'Genetic'.

Examples of Mosaic Variegation:

'Genetic Dwarf'-Jeff Smith, miniature, semi-double dark pink-red two tone with mosaic variegated dark green, cream and pink foliage.

'Genetic Heir'-Jeff Smith, standard. Light rose-pink pansy/darker wavy edge, some tan. Mosaic variegated bright green and lime foliage.

'Marmalade'- Champion, double medium pink/berry, fantasy edge. Crown variegation.

'Midget Lilian'-Champion, miniature single pink, mosiac plain foliage.

THE INFLUENCE OF TEMPERATURE AND FERTILIZER

Three of the four types of variegation are strongly influenced by temperature changes and nitrogen levels in the soil. These are spontaneous, TL, and Crown variegation. Young plants, for example, are often nearly colorless and may not survive unless they can be "greened up." At this point, they should be watered with fish emulsion or some other high nitrogen fertilizer once a week, as this stimulates the production of chlorophyll, the pigment that gives leaves their characteristic green color and is essential in photosynthesis (changing sun or artificial light into usable energy). Without it, the plants could never survive.

When the plants become well-established, though, it will be necessary to avoid nitrogen-rich fertilizers and to give them cooler temperatures; otherwise their variegation will be barely evident. An all-purpose fertilizer such as 20-20-20 can then be used since a relatively high proportion of nitrogen (the first of the three numbers) is still necessary to encourage healthy leaves and a symmetrical rosette.

If the leaves begin to lose their variegation, however, fertilizers with less nitrogen should be used. Once your plants have a good balance of variegation and green pigmentation, you can start thinking about growing them as show plants. In order to bring out the most intense leaf coloration while stimulating flowering, many growers use Peter's 5-50-17, a fertilizer especially developed for variegated plants. This should not be used for the entire life of the plants since it doesn't contain enough nitrogen for healthy growth.

Switching fertilizers every few months is therefore a good idea. If your plants once again become too heavily variegated, you can fertilize them with fish emulsion for a while until their leaves are greener.

As far as temperature is concerned, excess heat also causes the leaves to green up. When kept at 80 degrees F. (27 degrees C) or above, the variegated areas of the leaf gradually diminish while the green increases. On the other hand, variegation becomes more prominent in cooler weather. This is why it is so often recommended to put all variegated plants on the lowest shelf of your light garden where temperatures are slightly cooler.

All variegated plants appreciate an intense light source. Crown variegated plants will become vibrant, showing off the yellow centers when grown close to the lights.

A FEW CULTURAL HINTS

When hybridizing with variegated plants, if you wish to obtain variegated babies, use a variegated plant as the mother plant.

When propagating variegated plants, use leaves from the second row of leaves if possible since these are the young, strong leaves, and they will produce off-spring more easily than older leaves. It is also important to choose a leaf which has a good amount of chlorophyll (green) in it so it is able to bring nutrients to the root ball and babies.

Remember to place variegated plants on the bottom shelf of the light garden and in the center of the light for a more intense amount of variegation.

All types of variegated African violets are slower to grow. If you take a variegated leaf and plant it on the same day as you plant a green variety leaf, you will note that the green leaf produces babies much more quickly than the variegated leaf. The babies from the green leaf will grow into maturity much faster than those from variegated leaves. This is undoubtedly caused by the fact that the white portions of a variegated leaf contains no chlorophyll, the chemical in leaves that feeds roots and brings nutrients to babies.

This "accident of nature" which occurred in one of Tommie Lou Oden's baby plants brought all of this to us. When admiring one of your own variegated plants, take a minute to think of the beauty we would not be seeing if that one baby had not decided on its own to become something very special.

Planting by Moon Signs

Moon in Aries

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. Used for destroying noxious growths, weeds, pests, etc., and for cultivating.

Moon in Taurus

Productive and moist, earthy and feminine. Used for planting many crops, particularly potatoes and root crops, and when hardiness is important. Also used for lettuce, cabbage, and similar leafy vegetables.

Moon in Gemini

Barren and dry, airy and masculine. Used for destroying noxious growths, weeds and pests, and for cultivation.

Moon in Cancer

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. This is the most productive sign, used extensively for planting and irrigation.

Moon in Leo

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. This is the most barren sign, used only for killing weeds and for cultivation.

Moon in Virgo

Barren and moist, earthy and feminine. Good for cultivation and destroying weeds and pests.

Moon in Libra

Semi-fruitful and moist, airy and masculine. Used for planting many crops and producing good pulp growth and roots. A very good sign for flowers and vines. Also used for seeding hay, corn fodder, etc.

Moon in Scorpio

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. Nearly as productive as Cancer; used for the same purposes. Especially good for vine growth and sturdiness.

Moon in Sagittarius

Barren and dry, fiery and masculine. Used for planting onions, seeding hay, and for cultivation.

Moon in Capricorn

Productive and dry, earthy and feminine. Used for planting potatoes, tubers, etc.

Moon in Aquarius

Barren and dry, airy and masculine. Used for cultivation and destroying noxious growths, weeds, and pests.

Moon in Pisces

Very fruitful and moist, watery and feminine. Used along with Cancer and Scorpio, especially good for root growth.

May Moon Table

Date	Sign	Element	Nature	Phase
1 Sun	Aquarius	Air	Barren	4th 2:24
2 Mon. 10:43 am	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	4th
3 Tue.	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	4th
4 Wed. 2:36 pm	Aries	Fire	Barren	4th
5 Thu.	Aries	Fire	Barren	4th
6 Fri. 8:01 pm	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	4th
7 Sat.	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	4th
8 Sun.	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	New 4:45 am
9 Mon. 3:29 am	Gemini	Air	Barren	1st
10 Tue.	Gemini	Air	Barren	1st
11 Wed. 1:20 pm	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	1st
12 Thu.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	1st
13 Fri.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	1st
14 Sat. 1:17 am	Leo	Fire	Barren	1st
15 Sun.	Leo	Fire	Barren	1st
16 Mon. 1:46 pm	Virgo	Earth	Barren	2nd 4:57 am
17 Tue.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	2nd
18 Wed.	Virgo	Air	Semi-fruitful	2nd
19 Thu. 12:30 am	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	2nd
20 Fri.	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	2nd
21 Sat. 7:49 am	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	2nd
22 Sun.	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	2nd
23 Mon. 11:38 am	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	Full 4:18 pm
24 Tue.	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	3rd
25 Wed. 1:11 pm	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	3rd
26 Thu.	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	3rd
27 Fri. 2:10 pm	Aquarius	Air	Barren	3rd
28 Sat.	Aquarius	Air	Barren	3rd
29 Sun. 4:09 pm	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	3rd
30 Mon.	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	4th 7:47 am
31 Tue. 8:07 pm	Aries	Fire	Barren	4th

June Moon Table

Date	Sign	Element	Nature	Phase
1 Wed.	Aries	Fire	Barren	4th
2 Thu.	Aries	Fire	Barren	4th
3 Fri. 2:20 am	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	4th
4 Sat.	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	4th
5 Sun. 10:36 am	Gemini	Air	Barren	4th
6 Mon.	Gemini	Air	Barren	New 5:55 pm
7 Tue. 8:46 pm	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	1st
8 Wed.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	1st
9 Thu.	Cancer	Water	Fruitful	1st
10 Fri. 8:39 am	Leo	Fire	Barren	1st
11 Sat.	Leo	Fire	Barren	1st
12 Sun. 9:22 pm	Virgo	Earth	Barren	1st
13 Mon.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	1st
14 Tue.	Virgo	Earth	Barren	2nd 9:22 pm
15 Wed. 8:59 am	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	2nd
16 Thu.	Libra	Air	Semi-fruitful	2nd
17 Fri. 5:23 pm	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	2nd
18 Sat.	Scorpio	Water	Fruitful	2nd
19 Sun. 9:45 pm	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	2nd
20 Mon.	Sagittarius	Fire	Barren	2nd
21 Tue. 10:52 pm	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	2nd
22 Wed.	Capricorn	Earth	Semi-fruitful	Full 12:14 am
23 Thu. 10:36 pm	Aquarius	Air	Barren	3rd
24 Fri.	Aquarius	Air	Barren	3rd
25 Sat. 11:03 pm	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	3rd
26 Sun.	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	3rd
27 Mon.	Pisces	Water	Fruitful	3rd
28 Tue. 1:51 am	Aries	Fire	Barren	4th 2:23 pm
29 Wed.	Aries	Fire	Barren	4th
30 Thu. 7:45 am	Taurus	Earth	Semi-fruitful	4th

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I Switched, How About You?

by Beverley Williams
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

The increasing cost of electricity prompted me to investigate the feasibility of converting my existing plant lights to the high efficiency electronic ballasts and fluorescent light bulbs (lamps).

In Ontario, the cost of electricity is presently stable but is expected to rise in the near future. We pay $.0470 for the first 1,500 kWh (kilowatts) of electricity and $.0550 for the rest. In addition, we pay for delivery charges, regulatory charges, and debt retirement charges which are calculated based on the kilowatts that we use. So, if you can reduce your kilowatts, hopefully, you should be able to reduce your other charges and ultimately your overall bill.

Fluorescent lights have high efficacy (the amount of light produced per watt of electricity), long life, and low surface luminance. They are cool and come in a variety of colors. Fluorescent lights do require some form of ballast, an electrical control device that initiates the light arc with high starting voltage.

Presently, the majority of us are using the common 1.5-inch diameter (T12) cool-white fluorescent lamps or a combination of cool white/warm-white fluorescent lamps and transformer type magnetic ballasts. This older technology is fast becoming obsolete. High-efficiency 1-inch (T8) lamps with electronic ballasts are setting the new standard for low power consumption and illumination that closely resembles that of natural light. The 32-watt T8 lamp is fast becoming the standard for new construction and as a replacement for the older 40-watt T12 fluorescent lamps.

LIGHTS OR LAMPS

The "T" designation in fluorescent lamp nomenclature stands for tubular, the shape of the lamp. The number immediately following the T gives the diameter of the lamp in eighths of an inch. A T12 lamp is therefore twelve-eighths of an inch, or one and one half inches in diameter. A T8 lamp is eight eighths of an inch, or one inch in diameter.

Like T12 lamps, T8 lamps are available in a variety of color temperatures, including warm (3000K), neutral (3500K), cool (4100K), and very cool (5000K). "Full Spectrum" lamps are typically 5000K or higher and emit 10-20% of their output in the form of UV light.

T8 lamps have the same 20,000-hour rated lamp life as the standard T12 lamps. Frequent on/of cycles can reduce the fluorescent lamp life. The use of programmed start or dimming ballasts can increase the lap life to as much as 30,000 hours. T8 lamps also exhibit a slower decline in light output over time, relative to T12 lamps. At 40% of their rated life, standard T12 lamps only produce about 80% of their initial rated light output, compared to about 90% for T8 lamps.

T8 lamps are available in wattages of 17W for a 24 inch lamp, and 32W for a 48 inch lamp. T12 lamps use 20W for a 24 inch lamp and 34/40W for a 48 inch lamp. They are also available in three, five, six and eight foot lengths. T8's come in two different shapes, straight or u-tubes which is available with an overall length of 22 inches.

BALLASTS

T8 lamps require electronic ballast specifically designed to operate lamps at a lower current than T12 lamps. The ballast is the brain of the fluorescent fixture, responsible for maintaining the current through the lamp and providing the initial starting voltage. All fluorescent lamps require ballasts to provide the right voltage and current. Electronic ballasts use high-frequency, solid-state circuitry instead of heavy copper windings to perform this task. As a result, electronic ballasts produce more light for each watt, run cooler, and last longer.

If you are going to use T8 lamps, you must replace the ballast as well. You do not have to replace the tube ends as they use the medium bipin base; only the ballasts and lamps (light bulbs) have to replaced.

In the past, you had to replace each type of ballast with its correct replacement. The new electronic ballasts replace 10 different ballasts. It operates T5, T8, T10 and T12 lamps and multiple combinations of lamps (check with your local electrical contractor).

Electronic ballasts do have one drawback compared to magnetic ballasts. Unlike magnetic ballasts, which operate at line frequency (60Hz), electronic ballasts operate at 20,000 to 60,000 Hz and can introduce harmonic distortion or noise into the electric lines within the building, potentially overheating neutral lines, transformers, motors, and interfering with sensitive electronic equipment. This is normally not a problem except for facilities with heavy lighting loads and a large number of electronic ballasts. There is filtering available to help alleviate this problem, and most electronic ballast manufacturers have implemented passive filtering within the ballast to keep the distortion to less that 20% of fundamental 60Hz current.

The ballasts are not affected by brown-outs or voltage

fluctuations because the ballasts respond as if the dimmer is turned down. As a result, this ballast can work effectively on varying voltages currents down to 50%, and it works on 60Hz and 50Hz systems: 130 Volts max down to 60 Volts.

START METHOD

Another important fact about fluorescent ballasts is the starting method. The goal of the starter is to provide initial ionization of the gas to allow for the electrical arc between electrodes and begin illumination. T8 's are typically equipped with rapid start or instant start ballasts.

Rapid-start ballasts heat the electrodes quickly and then apply a 450-550 volt starting voltage to create the arc and begin the illumination (lighting) process. Most rapid-start ballasts continue to heat the electrode even after the lamp has started, resulting in a power loss of 1.5-2 Watts per lamp. Instant-start ballasts allow the lamp to start without delay by applying a high initial voltage about 700 volts for T8 lamps and instantly creating an arc across the electrodes. Instant-start ballasts have the lowest power loss but can decrease the life of the lamp because of degradation of the emissive coating on the electrodes from the high starting voltage.

HOUSING, REFLECTORS, ETC.

The housing is where all the electrical wiring and ballasts are mounted. The housing plays a role in how heat is transferred out of the fixture. An enclosed housing holds heat in the fixture which increases the ambient temperature surrounding the bulbs and may decrease the input wattage.

The reflector directs the light from the lamps towards the surface area where illumination is intended. Most standard reflectors in fluorescent fixtures are painted white which diffuses, scatters, or distributes the light with a reflectivity around 70 to 80 percent. New materials are available on the market today with the ability to increase the reflectivity from 80-95%. Some of these new materials have a mirror-like finish that permits precise redirection of the light rays. Fluorescent fixtures can be retrofitted with new reflectors which will often increase the light. Care should be taken because the change or redistribution of light might not be desirable.

ADVANTAGES

There are some obvious advantages to converting or retrofitting all your lamps and ballasts. Number one on my list is my lower electricity bill, but there are other advances as well. The electronic ballasts don't flicker or hum, and they use less power. Some of the other advances are: better color rendering, up to 15% cooler, and they are quieter. The use of an extra aluminum casing instead of steel for better heat dissipation helps keep the ballast cooler. Heat is the biggest problem with ballast and lamp failure.

The cost is estimated to be 32-40% less energy by some of the industry sources. You cut your energy costs; you get a higher quality of light at similar light levels and reduce power consumption. The 32-watt T8 lamp produces similar levels of light as the older 40-watt T12 lamp.

This is also a great time to clean any dust and debris from the reflectors.

The typical conversion of T12 fixtures with magnetic ballast to T8 fixtures with electronic ballasts costs between $25.00 to $35.00* for a two-lamp, four foot light fixture.

Energy savings from this can pay back the initial investment in two to three years in an industrial application and five to seven years in a commercial application. *This does not include the cost of conversion by a licensed electrician.

If you are uncomfortable doing this yourself, I would recommend that you hire an electrician, but it will take more time to convert over than you think. Fortunately, my husband is an electrician, and he did the conversion for me over several evenings.

T8 lamps used with electronic ballasts will typically use about 32% less energy than the same T12 and magnetic ballasts. T8's use little or no mercury inside the lamp, also saving on disposal and environmental costs.

The correlated color temperature (CCT) and color rendering index (CRI) of the lamps is controlled by varying the selection of phosphors. The CRI of T8 lamps can be specified from 70 to as high as the mid-90's. Every lamp manufacturer has a product coding system denoting CRI which requires a catalog to decipher. The light from T8 lamps has a higher CRI than standard T12's. The higher CRI makes objects and surfaces in a room appear more like they would under natural light. Three fluorescent T8 lamps give 40% more light output than four T12 lamps.

Some people are sensitive to the rapid flicker and the soft hum or buzz of common fluorescent lights. Electronic ballasts are 13% quieter, nearly eliminating both the flicker and hum and are less than half the weight of magnetic ballasts by nearly six pounds.

I would recommend that you purchase your ballasts from an electrical supply wholesaler in your area because they usually are less expensive.

So, lower temperature operation, quieter than traditional fluorescent lamps, no flickers for less eyestrain, extended ballast life, lower energy costs (lower electric bills), and better color. What more could you ask for of your lights ..... well, maybe BEST IN SHOW!

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From the *Toronto Gesneriad Society Newsletter*

Exposing Your Tubers

by John Beaulieu

From his publication, African Violet and Gesneriad News

"Exposing one's tubers" - that does have an odd ring to it, according to Jon Dixon, a past President of the AGGS. Jon has, however, been a pioneer in this endeavor. He started growing gesneriads and being active in a gesneriad society in the late 70's and was already familiar with caudiciform succulents. So, it was a natural method for him to raise the tubers of his *Sinningia leucotricha* and *S. cardinalis* above the soil line.

When Jon first entered his plants with exposed tubers in shows, the judges didn't know what to think of them. Most judges thought that tubers were supposed to be buried. We have since learned that many *Sinningia* species in the wild have their tubers exposed to a degree. But, a few do have tubers that are buried in the manner of bulbs.

If Jon is repotting an old *Sinningia*, he will raise the tuber, brushing the soil away from the sides and examining the density and location of the roots. He will clip off some roots while leaving a few to grow exposed for about a half inch or more above the soil line. They will also thicken and develop bark. With some larger plants, he has discovered that they are very slow to grow larger in diameter. So, by continuously raising the tuber when repotting, the tuber will grow taller and taller, though not necessarily wider.

Two advantages of raising and exposing tubers are that they are less likely to rot, and by being above ground, there is more room in the pot for roots to grow.

Most sinningias are rupicoluos, meaning that they are found growing among rocks. They may be found on very thin layers of soil, wedged into crevices or buried in deeper pockets of soil.

Jon figures that the species that grow underground tubers tend to come from sites that are not rocky but, probably grassy. In these areas of more soil, the tubers are fully underground and tend to multiply. *Sinningia tubiflora* is the best known of these. Jon lists other underground tuber species as being *S. curtiflora, S. allagophylla, S. elatior, S. kautskyi, S. pusilla,* and *S. sceptrum*.

Alain Chautems has explored in search of sinningias in Brazil and has found that *S. elatior* has the deepest buried tuber, being as deep as eight inches under the surface.

Hybrid sinningias are often descended from a gene pool of many species. Peter Shalit, another well-known *Sinningia* grower and hybridizer, believes that both *S. eumorpha* and *S. conspicua* prefer to have the tops of their tubers under the soil. If a hybrid has genes of these two species predominating, Peter feels that they may not like having the top of the tubers exposed. It is just an impression he has formed over the years. Peter adds that with today's mixed-up hybrids, many will be fine with exposed tubers.

John Boggan used to grow a lot of sinningias, and names *S. macrostachya, S. lineata, S. macropoda, S. leucotricha,* and *S. iarae* as commonly growing with the tuber exposed. Hybrids involving those species would probably do well with exposed tubers. John feels that growing these plants with up to half the tuber exposed is a very attractive and interesting way to exhibit them.

Hobbyists have been fascinated with exposed tubers for a long time. The photo directly below was taken by Paul Arnold at the Atlantic City convention of the African Violet Society of America in 1960. This was a six year old tuber of *Sinningia macropoda* and was flowering without being planted in any soil. At a recent meeting of the Toronto Gesneriad Society, the *Sinningia bulbosa* seen in the lower photo drew a lot of attention when it was entered in the mini show. It was a young plant growing from a mostly exposed tuber.

BOYCE EDENS RESEARCH FUND

by Carol J. Brown

Not too long after I moved to Arkansas, I was driving my son to a Boy Scout outing. Unsure of my exact location, I stopped at a small gas station-store combination to ask directions. Two very nice older gentlemen proceeded to explain the route to the camp as follows: go down the road a short piece and then you'll turn left where the old willow tree used to be. I thanked them politely and pointed my car in the direction I had been going, trying to figure out where the old willow tree used to be.

Trying to unravel these directions reminds me of joining an organization. Everyone thinks everyone else knows where the "old willow tree used to be", or to put it another way, everyone expects even the newest member to know how things have been always been done or what all the different committees are and how they do things, etc. This is what happened to me when I joined the local African violet club. TAVS donates to the Boyce Edens Research Fund. It's easy to guess that it's a fund that provides money or research, but what research and who is Boyce Edens? After a couple of years of trying to figure things out, without much success, I decided to start doing some "RESEARCH" on my own.

My first source of information was *The African Violet Society of America Handbook for African Violet Growers, Exhibitors and Judges*, page 11, which reads: "AVSA Members support research on African violets at the university level through their contributions to AVSA's Boyce Edens Fund". That was a good start. I discovered it is a fund established to provide for university level research on various things that affect African violets. Makes sense to me! What I wanted to know was specifically what kind of research and why is it named the "Boyce Edens Research Fund". For the answers to these questions, I turned to my next source of information, back issues of The African Violet Magazine.

The African Violet Society of America (AVSA) was organized on November 8, 1946. Boyce Edens was there, at the very first organizational meeting. He not only was one of the founders and charter member of AVSA, he served as our first Treasurer from 1946 to 1952.

An article by Anne Tinari and Emilie Savage written in 1986 decries Mr. Edens as "a gentle, knowledgeable individual with a background in social services and the humanities". The article goes on to tell that he was a member of the Men's Garden Club in Atlanta, GA. He was an authority on both Iris and African violets. His interest in plants took him into the area of nomenclature. His leadership instincts again put him into the role of organizing and serving on the AVSA Nomenclature Committee. This committee later developed into Plant Registration for AVSA. He was instrumental in persuading commercial growers to compete and display at AVSA Conventions. He initiated the first scholarship funds. It was after his death in 1953 that the Scientific Research Fund, of which he and Mr. Henry J. Peterson were the originators, was renamed in his honor as the Boyce Edens Research Fund that we know today.

Boyce Edens was the recipient of the first AVSA Honorary Life Membership Award in 1949. Boyce Edens and Ruth Carey were the first inductees (posthumously) into the AVSA Hall of Fame, during the 40th Anniversary year of the African Violet Society of America, Inc.

Mrs. J. D. (Dorothy) Spence of Austin, TX, wrote an article in January 1984 that listed a few of the accomplishments of the Boyce Edens Research Fund. Included in these are the effects of fluorescent lighting on African violets, improvement in plant techniques, and control of various insects and diseases.

African violet research is supported by individual and affiliate donations to the Boyce Edens Research Fund. A portion of commercial members' dues also is contributed to the fund. I am looking forward in the near future to seeing more articles detailing the work that this fund is supporting.

IN MEMORY

Retha Johnson

Retha Johnson, long time member of the AVSA and a founding member of the North Star African Violet Council 26 years ago, passed away on February 2, 2005. She was a senior judge, teacher, mentor, and friend to many. She loved growing African violets, flower arranging, and gardening.

Retha was known for her knowledge, her creativity, and her energy. She was loved for her graciousness, her patience, and her humor, and she will always be remembered for her elegance, her style, and her kindness. She will be greatly missed.

Josephine "Jo" McCoy

Josephine "Jo" McCoy of Galt, California, passed away on February 22, 2005 after a brief illness. She was an AVSA & AGGS Master Judge & Teacher, Master Florist, and author (Floral Design Concepts with African Violets & Other Gesneriads). Jo was the founder and Honorary Life Member of Delta Gesneriad & African Violet Society, and helped start many other societies across the country. Though a resident of a nursing home the last several years, she continued to grow violets and gesneriads on her window sill and even gave classes to the staff on how to grow them. She was a lady of many talents in addition to growing plants: a tailor, worked for Warner Bros. Studios in costume construction, a doll maker, painter, and even a pilot. She will be missed by her many friends.

Hybridizing B-Man's Style

by Bruno Curcuruto

You can pollinate plants at any time of the year, but the best time is spring. Choose the plants you would like to cross. Remember, if you're looking for a variegated cross, the mother plant (the plant on which the seeds will grow) must also be variegated. Use pollen from a flower which has been in bloom for a few days. Use either a single or semi-double flower. It's difficult to get pollen from a double flower because the pollen sacks normally form part of the flower petals. Make sure the anthers are dry and not mushy. The pollen should be applied to a flower which also has been in bloom for a few days. Before applying the pollen, gently remove the anthers from the receiving flower to avoid self-pollination. The applied pollen should stick to the stigma of the receiving flower. Apply pollen to a few flowers on the same bloom stalk. This gives you a better chance of seedpods surviving until they mature. Make a note or label the cross from which plant the pollen was taken. Don't forget to include the date.

You will know within a few days if the pollination was successful because the pistil will begin to swell. The seed pod will reach its maximum size in about four weeks. The size and shape depends on the amount of seeds it contains and the genetic makeup of the mother plant. Let the seed pod dry on the plant for as long as possible. Seedpods that dry up before four months have passed probably won't be viable. It could take between four and nine months for seed pods to ripen fully. When the seedpod looks dry, remove it from the plant and place it in a dry area for a few days. After drying, the seeds can be planted or stored for a future day.

If you've decided to sow the seeds, plant them in a sealed container with a clear top. Clear plastic wrap and a rubber band will do the job. The seeds should be planted on a very fine potting mix. Peat moss which is rubbed through a fine screen works well. Carefully crack open the seed pod onto a creased sheet of white paper. Depending on the number of seeds that fall, you may decide to save some for future use. Place them in a small paper envelope and store them in a cool dry place. Remember to label the packet. Sprinkle the remaining seeds on the soil, trying to spread them evenly over the surface. Don't cover the seeds. Spray the soil surface with plain water. Using fertilizer will cause algae to grow and may prevent the seedlings from growing. Label the container with the parentage of the seeds and the sowing date. Place the container under bright light. In about two weeks you should start to see tiny green leaves. This will occur over a period of a few weeks. Always keep the seedlings moist and the humidity high. Seedlings can be transplanted whenever you feel comfortable in handling them. A gentle tug on one of the leaves with tweezers will normally break the seedling free from the soil. Plant as many as you dare to grow using the smallest pots or containers you can find.

Looking for seedlings that are potential show plants? It's still too soon. I always transplant the largest seedlings; they're the ones with more vigor. In a month or two, they will be ready to transplant into 2 1/2" pots. A decision is now made on whether they continue growing or get tossed. Keep seedlings that have good symmetry. Seedlings with poor symmetry are more than likely to continue to have this problem. Watch for seedlings that hold their bloom stalks high off their leaves. Dispose of any plant that drops flowers. Watch for the number of buds on the first bloom stalk. Five or more buds normally will produce more flowers as the plant matures. Look for plants that you feel are unique. Try not to keep plants that are similar. Keep as many as time and space allow you. Make sure you maintain good records of the plants you decide to grow. Make a note of the parentage and any other useful information. Grow the seedling on for at least three generations. The actual seedling is generation one. Compare all three generations to ensure that they are nearly identical. If you think you have a winner, register it with AVSA.

From *Chatter*, Journal of the AVS of Canada

Root Rot

by Joyce Stork • *From AVSA's Web Site Frequently Asked Questions*

If root rot has not reached the crown of a plant, you should be able to save it. The rot will be visible inside the stem (when the main stem is cut away from the roots) as a brown pithy center. Even a healthy stem will have a nearly complete circle of purple dots, so don't let that worry you. If you see a brown pithy opening or even a brownish center, make another cut about one-fourth of an inch above it, and continue until no evidence of the rot is visible. Finally, clean your knife with bleach or disinfectant and make one more cut. You will probably have to remove leaves to make these cuts. If the crown remains intact, and is not falling apart, it can be repotted into fresh soil in a fresh pot, watered, and bagged for about a month until new roots have formed.

Another form of root rot will appear on the outside of the stem as a slippery skin. In this case, leaves will often have a darkened point where they join the stem of a rotting plant. Here it is better to remove leaves to get above the decay, where leaves have a healthy looking connection to the stem, and make your cut there with a clean knife, again repotting and bagging until the crown is rerooted.

Sinningia

by Marge Huntley

The genus *Sinningia* contains many species of perennial, hairy herbs or shrubs from Mexico to Argentine and Brazil. Most grow from woody tubers which enlarge each year, although several are tuberless. Sinningias are not grown as much these days as they once were in some parts of the world, but are on the rise in the US.

SIZE - They vary in size from micro-miniature to those which grow two meters tall. There have been many hybrids produced since the first *Sinningia* was brought into cultivation in the late 19th century. By crossing micro-mini *S. pusilla* with the intermediate size *S. eumorpha*, the miniature *S.* 'Dollbaby' was produced. This was a breakthrough and eventually led to the many lovely miniature sinningias which are such a joy.

MICRO-MINIATURES - 'White Sprite' is a sport of *S. pusilla*, and as its name suggests, it is pure white. These two do not die down in winter and need a protected environment such as a terrarium. They will drop their seed and cover the soil with plants. It can be a chore cutting off each spent flower stem with tiny scissors. Scissors should be used. With tweezers or your fingers, you can easily remove the top of the plant.

MINIATURES - These come in most colors except yellow, although there is an orange one called *S.* 'Super Orange'. Many have dots of darker color in the throat. There are even double flowered varieties. They die down in winter (go into dormancy).

SMALL SIZE - place *S. hirsute* (very hairy) in this category. I find the size range becomes rather blurred after this. Suffice to say, the size or height advances through, *S. eumorpha - S. speciosa S. leucatricha - S. cardinalis - S. reitzi* to the tall growing *S. tubiflora* which is perfumed. *S. speciosa* is sold in Garden Centers all over the world under the wrong name! It is labeled Florist's Gloxinia. It is a colorful plant with brilliant colored peloric flowers often with trilled edges and patterned leaves. Real Gloxinias grow from a scaly rhizome.

DEALING WITH DORMANCY - When plants have finished flowering and are starting to look shabby, they can be trimmed back, leaving a short stub from the tuber. If the whole stem is removed, the tuber will be very unwilling to break dormancy. Cut back on watering until you see signs of new growth from the tuber - repot into fresh mix probably into the same size pot. If more than one growth occurs on a small tuber, it is best to remove the extra growths and keep to a single stem. Some of the larger growers look quite nice with up to three growing points, but never allow the plant to look congested. Sometimes the new growth starts before the tatty leaves have been removed. Do not repot immediately when the growth appears. Wait for another few weeks, then repot into a fresh pot

POTTING MIX - Regular African violet mix is used.

FERTILIZING - Use fertilizer at no more than half strength and leach with plain water every four weeks. Use plain water only when plants are dormant, and sparingly.

TO COVER OR NOT TO COVER - Sinningias will grow and flower without being covered. Many growers find that in their conditions, miniature varieties need the protection of a clear propagating box to maintain the necessary humidity.

HUMIDITY - Between 60 and 70 percent produces the best growth and bloom.

LIGHT STAND OR WINDOW - Bright light is needed so do the best you can.

From the *Newsletter* of the Early Morn AV Group, Australia

Blossom Color

It is not unusual for baby African violet plants to be different from the parent plant. Each of those new baby plants developed from a single cell near the cut end of the leaf from which you grew the new plants. Occasionally the genes for flower color can get mixed up in one of those individual cells and produce a baby plant that is a bit different.

This happens more often with the fancier color combinations. Examples are the ones with spots and streaks in a color that contrasts with the principal color of the blossom. These are called fantasy blossoms. The most common fantasy blossoms are pink with blue spots. Very often the baby plants from a fantasy blossom will be a disappointing plain pink or plain blue.

It also happens in the case of blossoms with edges in a contrasting color. An example would be blue blossoms with white edges. Sometimes the white edges get omitted, and the color is plain blue. A final example where this switch to one color happens frequently is chimera (pinwheel striped) blossoms. These have a stripe in one color down the center of each petal which contrasts with the color of the rest of the blossom. Chimeras almost never come true to the parent when they are propagated from a leaf, although they can be propagated successfully by sucker or blossom stalk propagation.

It is more unusual to have one plain color change to another. For example, plain blue seldom changes to plain pink. But even this does happen occasionally. In fact, it is these changes which we call mutations that produced all the colors of violets we have today. The only color occurring naturally in the wild African violets is blue-violet.

From *Chatter*, publication of the AVS of Canada

VIOLETS IN THE COMMUNITY

by Barbara Conrad, President
Carlsbad African Violet Society

Plant enthusiasts can tell you all about pruning rose bushes and how to split and repot an orchid, but anything about our African violets...hold on here. These horticulturists are suddenly at a loss for words, stopping in their tracks. Wide-eyed and anxious, most of these folks look as if a taboo subject has been raised.

Aha! Here's where you can slide open the door to dismiss their fears in cultivating and propagating our lovely saintpaulias. Unfortunately, plant lovers probably won't come to you asking questions, as they have already had too many other plants to learn about. You need to get out into the community and invite people into your world of beautiful African violets.

We understand why we need to expose more people to our hobby, but where and how? It can be quite easy. Feel your way slowly by giving growing tips, a plant, leaves, a plastic bag of fertilizer, and encouragement to a few of your personal friends. This one-on-one exposure is great motivation for them to get started on a new hobby. At the same time, you are building up confidence in your capabilities to speak easily about something for which you have a passion. Having your friends' respect and appreciation for your help is a reward in itself. Listen to their questions which teach you what you need to include in your next series of presentations.

Then try talking to a small group at a local church or another plant society, such as a begonia club. Senior centers are always looking for new topics as presentations. They will often offer an honorarium to cover your gasoline costs, handouts, and possibly a plant for each attendee. If you are a bit shy, bring along a friend to be in the audience and focus for as long as necessary on that smiling, encouraging face.

What should you say? Talk to these new faces just the way you did with your friends at home. Tell them how you became involved with violets. Show them baby plants next to their mamas and separate a few. Cut a leaf for propagation. Discuss lighting, water, fertilizer, and violet pests. That will easily keep you going for a half-hour, which is just long enough. Then allow fifteen minutes or so for questions and answers.

This is your ideal opportunity to offer information about AVSA and pass around back issues of the AVSA magazine. Give details about your own club. Various plants may be on display: a standard, a semi-mini, a mini, a trailer, and another gesneriad. A large lightweight plastic storage box filled with excelsior is excellent for this purpose, to be rolled on a luggage dolly. At least one plant may be given out as a door prize, plus the back issues of the AVSA Magazine. Handouts on cultivation and propagation are passed out along with supplies. These inexpensive kits include a plastic cup, a wick, perlite, starter mix, two leaves, and a tiny bag of fertilizer. If you happen to have lots of small starter plants on hand, bring those along too. However, this is not a time to sell plants.

Our annual San Diego County Fair has an outdoor horticultural grandstand for speakers. This is a wonderful opportunity to educate a larger audience. Our club also reserves a one-day booth with lots of educational handouts, as well as enthusiasm.

This past year, I was asked to speak at a Horticultural Judges' Council meeting in San Diego. These judges have had a difficult time judging violets in their various community flower shows. Retirement homes are another outlet with an appreciative audience. Many of the residents like to share their violet experiences from years gone by as violets bring about fond memories. I am the richer person in these outings. While I am giving my time and sharing, I am also learning from others. It has become another avenue of volunteering.

Recently, I was interviewed for our city's Home and Garden magazine. The resulting feature story with photos resulted in a multitude of e-mails, mostly asking specific questions. This experience showed me that the community interest in violets is very much alive. We just need to reach out to these people. Just do it and have fun!

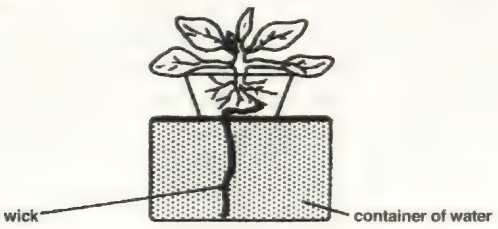
All Library Requests Must Be Made in Writing to the African Violet Society of America Office

THE HOW, WHEN, WHERE, AND WHY OF RESERVOIRS

by Sue Gardner

HOW to use reservoirs

(1) Fill the container you are using for a reservoir with water containing fertilizer, make sure the wick in the pot is wet, and place pot on reservoir as shown in the following diagram.



Use a reservoir which is a suitable size for the pot. It is unwise to try to balance a large pot on a small reservoir. As a general rule, a container with a lid is suitable for most pots. Of course, you need to cut 2 or 3 holes in the lid to enable a wick to pass into the reservoir and allow some air inside.

Pots between 2 - 4 inches in diameter can sit in containers with narrow necks. Larger pots can be supported over wide containers by means of solid collars. Trays with wire inserts can be used for groups of smaller plants.

(2) Use a colored or opaque reservoir. This is to prevent the growth of algae as light is necessary for algal growth.

(3) Use plant stacking for best utilization of space. It also allows for miniature plants to be placed closer to the light source.

WHEN to use reservoirs

(1) Use reservoirs all the time, particularly if you are a dilatory waterer! It saves constant checking of soil moisture and the need to water several times per week. (2) Use reservoirs when going on vacation. Large 1/2 or one gallon ice cream containers will keep your plant happy for weeks. If you are away for a very long holiday, a friend can re-fill them for you. (3) In summer it is a good idea to use reservoirs for wick watering even if you don't like to do so at other times. This is because a plant uses much more water in hot weather, so it needs a constant supply

WHERE to use reservoirs

(1) Use reservoirs and wick watering on windowsills and particularly on light stands as plants grow more quickly there. (2) Use a plant with a decorative wick watering container as a centerpiece on a dining table. If you wish, you can place a pot and reservoir in a decorative container.

WHY use reservoirs

(1) A wick watering system provides constant food and water to a growing plant. This allows the plant to grow in an even fashion. (2) Using wick-watering systems eliminate daily checking of plants by busy people. (3) Reservoirs containing water can provide the level of humidity that African violets love. (4) Individual reservoirs for plants reduce the danger of cross contamination if pests or diseases are present.

From the *Newsletter* of the
Early Morn AV Group, Australia

The African Violet Seed Pod

From *An Introduction to Gesneriads, AV's and Their Relatives*

The first sign that an African violet flower has been pollinated is a swelling of the ovary, as a seed pod starts to form.

Eventually the petals will dry out and fall away, leaving just the pod.

The pods will usually stay green and healthy for as long as 6 to 9 months. They take this long for the seed to develop fully.

When the seed is ready, the pods will turn brown and the stem will start to dry out. When it is dry, you can break the pod open and sow the seeds.

THE *KOHLERIA*

by Nancy Robitaille

Pronunciation: co Leer ee a

Kohleria was found in 1848 and named in honor of J. M. Kohler, a teacher of natural history.

These plants have very fuzzy leaves like long, soft hair-like appendages. Leaves are also large, sometimes up to five inches in length and three inches wide. Everything about the *Kohleria* is hairy: the stalk, leaves, calyx, and flowers all have a hairy look about them. This hairy velvetness is very appealing to the grower.

Flowers are rather typical for the gesneriad family with a tubular form and tips of the petals separated into five lobes, two smaller and three larger ones. Colors of flowers for *Kohleria* are orange, red-yellow, pink, and purple. The corolla tube throats may be a darker shade than the petals. Vivid colored dots are often present on the petals. A few colors feature streaks down into the corolla tube.

K. eriantha may grow to four feet with vermillion flowers. *K. amabilis* is lower growing and long-blooming, with green-magenta-pink flowers. This might be a good subject as a basket plant. Good light and generous feeding is required, especially at the beginning after dormancy. These two species were popular as houseplants in the fifties. Nowadays, hybrids are easier to grow and much more popular than the species mentioned.

Kohleria 'Manchu'

There are approximately 65 species of *Kohleria,* although only about 15 species are used today for hybridization. *Kohleria* came originally from Central America and northern South America, although the first plants were brought from Columbia.

Kohleria grow from what looks like a rough worm, a scaly rhizome, and have a resting period during the autumn and winter. At this time, remove all the spent growth and the rhizomes will send out new shoots. Place something in the soil to indicate there is a live plant in there just resting with no green to show it is there. Reproduction is by stem and leaf cuttings, seeds, scaly rhizomes, and propagules.

Some time ago *Kohleria* often appeared under the incorrect names of Isoloma or Tydaea in catalogues and horticultural literature. With interest rising in the species and hybrids, this was corrected.

Newer, more popular hybrids of *Kohleria* are 'Rongo', 'Longwood', 'Strawberry Fields', and others.

Growing conditions:

The temperature in your home is important for *Kohleria*. With temperatures rising into the eighties, you will be unsuccessful with this genus of gesneriad.

This is a cool-temperature loving plant. It should be grown at sixty to seventy degrees F. in the day and reduced to fifty to sixty at night. The ten-degree difference between day and night temps is very important. Oddly enough, *Kohleria* grow best in a cool spot where there is low light intensity, such as in England where growers have great success. Many growers have had bad luck with *Kohleria* because of trying to grow them exactly like African violets. Note the differences in culture below.

Plants like bright light but should not be placed in direct sunlight for longer than one or two hours a day. With florescent tubes, keep the tubes ten to twelve inches above the tops of the plants for best results.

Potting soil should be very similar to what we use for African violets, a 1-1-1 mix of peat moss, vermiculite, and perlite.

Staking:

Most *Kohleria* need staking for sturdy, upright growth; otherwise, they may be used as trailers.

Single rhizomes may be planted like seeds to increase your plants. Each scale separated or broken off from a piece of rhizome will grow.

When plants have nearly completed the growth cycle, small scaly growths form in the leaf axils. These are propagules or catkins (small rhizomes). With good culture, each propagule is capable of sending up a new plant. It is easy to collect the propagules and place them in a plastic sack in a cool place. These should not be too dry. When planted, they resemble fuzzy young caterpillars. Always remove old growth to encourage the *kohleria* to continue to grow until fall.

Seed:

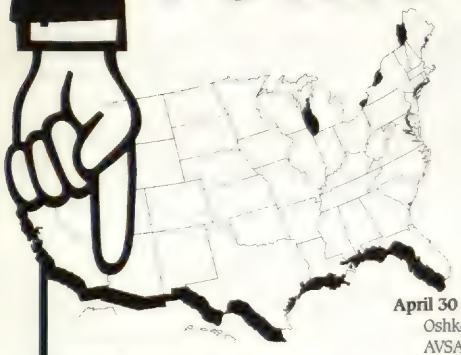
Seeds sown will germinate in two to three weeks. Transplant seedlings when plantlets are about one-half inch tall. At three-to-four inches tall, pot them up, three plants to a pot. Feed lightly with one-tenth solution each time you water. Most seedlings bloom the first year.

Kohlerias should never be permitted to dry out completely. If it does, it is likely to die. Feed mature kohlerias 1/4 strength fertilizer.

Pests:

Pests are the usual African violet sort. Never use an insecticide with oil base such as Neem oil since this will damage fuzzy leaves.

Coming Events



April 29 - May 1 - NEW JERSEY
Garden State AVS Judged Show/Sale
Market Fair
3535 US Route One South
West Windsor, NJ
Apr 29 - Noon - 9pm
Apr 30 - 10am - 9pm
May 1 - 10am - 4pm
Info: Shelia Ando (609) 275 - 8708
Email: sando8888@aol.com

April 29 - May 1 - IOWA
Evening AVC Show/Sale
Merle Hay Mall
Des Moines, IA
Apr 29 - Noon - 9pm
Apr 30 - 9am - 5pm
May 1 - Noon - 4pm
Info: Joan Watts (641) 377 - 2656

April 30 & May 1 - NEW YORK
Saintpaulia Society of Long Island
Annual Show/Sale
Clark Gardens
Albertson, NY
Apr 30 - 2:30pm - 4:30pm
May 1 - 10am - 4:30pm
Info: Joseph Palagonia (718) 738-3442

April 30 & May 1 - CONNECTICUT
Naugatonic AVS Judged Show
Staybridge Suites
6905 Main St.
(exit 53 off Merritt Pkwy.)
Stratford, CT
Apr 30 - 1pm - 4pm
May 1 - 10am - 4pm
Info: Don Goodwin (860) 283 - 5311

April 30 & May 1 - WISCONSIN
Oshkosh Violet Society 25th Annual
AVSA Judged Show/Sale
St. Josaphat Parish Center
1332 Spruce St.
Oshkosh, WI
Apr 30 - 10am - 4:30pm
May 1 - 9:30am - 3pm
Info: Kevin Degner (920) 426 - 3764
Email: kdegner@mcleodusa.net
Cathy Heider (920) 685 - 5262

April 30 & May 1 - MISSOURI
Metropolitan St. Louis AV Council
Show/Sale
Missouri Botanical Garden
4344 Shaw Blvd.
St. Louis, MO
Both Days: 9am - 5pm
Info: Pat Dunlap (636) 789 - 3604

April 30 - May 1 - NEW YORK
AV & Gesneriad Society of WNY Judged
Show/Sale
Walden Galleria Mall
Walden Ave., Cheektowaga, NY
Apr 30 - 11am - 9pm
May 1 - 10am - 5pm
Info: Holly (716) 684 - 1387
Email: Coralbells51@aol.com

May 6 & 7 - OHIO
Parmatown AVC Show/Sale
7899 West Ridgewood Dr.
Parma, OH
May 6 - 9am - 9pm
May 7 - 9am - 5pm
Info: Lori Hilfer (440) 582 - 4310
Email: rahilfer@adelphia.net

May 7 - CALIFORNIA
Foothill AVS Display/Sale
Westfield Shoppingtown
112 Plaza Dr.
West Covina, CA
Mall Hours
Info: Marianne Kadohata
(626) 331 - 0290
Email: mcalvin@LASuperiorCourt.org

May 7 - CALIFORNIA
Fancy Bloomers AVS
Pre-Mother's Day Plant Sale
Coddingtown Mall - Gottschalk's
Corridor
Hwy 101 & Guerneville Rd.
Santa Rosa, CA
Hours: 10am - 4pm
Info: Becky Jackson (707) 584 - 1386
Email: dbjackson@earthlink.net

May 7 & 8 - ILLINOIS
Late Bloomers AVS AVSA Judged
Show/Sale
Colonial Village Mall
1240 South Alpine Rd.
Rockford, IL
May 7 - 10am - 6pm
May 8 - 11am - 5pm
Info: Carole Zimmerman
(608) 325 - 2550

May 7 - NEW JERSEY
AVC of Burlington County Annual
Show/Sale
Burlington Center Mall
Route 541
Burlington, NJ
Hours: Noon - 9pm
Info: Florence Murphy
(609) 386 - 9234

May 7 - OREGON
Portlandia Violet Club Display/Sale
Jantzen Beach Mall
1405 Jantzen Beach Center
Portland, OR
Info: Blanche Bunker
(503) 761 - 7861

MAY 6 - 8 - NEW YORK
AVS of Syracuse 52nd Annual
Show/Sale
Great Northern Mall
Route 31
Clay, NY
May 6 - Noon - 9:30pm
May 7 - 10am - 9:30pm
May 8 - 11am - 6pm

May 13 - 15 - PENNSYLVANIA
AVS of Springfield Annual Judged
Show/Sale
Springfield Mall
Baltimore Pike
Springfield, PA
May 13 - Noon - 9:30
May 14 - 10am - 9:30
May 15 - 11am - 5pm
Info: Joan Santino (610) 485 - 0211
Email: mzjoans@yahoo.com

May 14 & 15 - CALIFORNIA
Montrose AVS & Burbank AVS Annual
Display/Sale
Descanso Gardens
1418 Descanso Dr.
La Canada, CA
Info: Vicki Ringer (818) 884 - 0537
Email: VickiRinger@aol.com

May 14 - BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA
Vancouver AV & Gesneriad Society
44th Annual Show/Sale
VanDusen Gardens, Floral Hall
37th & Oak Street
Vancouver BC, Canada
Admission: $2
Info: Katrina Andresen
Email: kandresen@telus.net
Web Site: http://www3.telus.net/vavgs

May 14 & 15 - MISSOURI
Unpredictable's AVS 22nd Annual
Show/Sale
Loose Park Garden Center
5200 Pennsylvania Ave.
Kansas City, MO
May 14 - 10am - 5pm
May 15 - 10am - 2pm
Info: Fred Inbody (816) 373 - 6915
Email: kskd1@juno.com

May 14 & 15 - CALIFORNIA
Burbank AVS & Montrose AVS
Display/Sale
Descanso Gardens
1418 Descanso Dr.
La Canada, CA
May 14 - 9am - 4pm
May 15 - 11am - 3pm
Info: (818) 846 - 1241

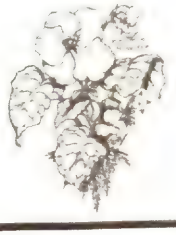
May 15 - ONTARIO, CANADA
Toronto AVS Annual Show/Sale
Toronto Botanical Gardens
777 Lawrence Ave. E.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Hours: 11am - 4pm
Info: Louise McPherson
(416) 445 - 7774
Email: torontoafricanvioletsociety@hotmail.com

May 18 - PENNSYLVANIA
African Violet Enthusiasts of Berks
County Show/Sale
Berks County Agriculture Center
1238 County Welfare Rd.
(across from Berk's Heim)
Leesport, PA
Hours: 7pm - 9pm
Info: Cathy Stockett (610) 682 - 0708
Email: aveb2005@msn.com

May 18 - 21 - ALBERTA, CANADA
AVS of Canada 2005 Convention
Hosted by: Edmonton AVS
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
Info: (780) 486 - 2545
Email: eavs2005@hotmail.com
www.avsc.ca

May 21 & 22 - ILLINOIS
Illinois AVS Annual Spring Show
Hilton Lisle/Naperville
3003 Corporate West Dr.
Lisle, IL
May 21 - 10am - 5:00pm
May 22 - 10am - 4:00pm
Info: Bill Meier (630) 842 - 9505
Email: 2005show@avs-online.org

May 28 & 29 - ILLINOIS
Glenview/Northshore AVS Show/Sale
Chicago Botanic Garden
Glencoe, IL
May 28 - Noon - 4:30pm
May 29 - 10am - 4:30pm
Parking: $10 for non-garden members
Info: Barbara Goodsell
(847) 729 - 1896



Rejuvenation

by Peg Eaton

It's not only our violets that need perking up after the long winter! Now is a great time to shower some extra TLC on your plants - they will reward you richly in short order. There are a number of things you can do to refresh your violet collection.

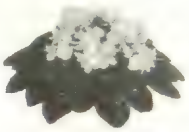
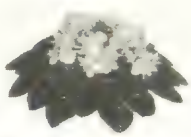
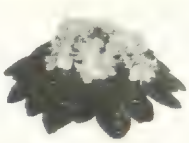
First and foremost, make some time to re-pot your plants. Most violet growers today use a "soilless mix" consisting of various proportions of sphagnum peat moss, perlite, and vermiculite. Because this medium is basically sterile, it's important that we regularly fertilize our violets to provide the nutrients they need to grow and bloom. Violets only bloom on new growth so it's important to support that growth. However, the constant use of fertilizer, combined with the breakdown of the peat moss, can drastically affect the pH of the soil and this can make our violet lose the ability to actually "use" the fertilizer that we are providing them. The soil, can become acidic, and nutrients are then "locked up." So, it's important to provide new soil, via repotting, at least once per year (that's the very minimum - ideally you should try to repot a couple of times a year and more often if you are growing for show).

During your repotting adventure, take the time to check for "necks" and "suckers." If the violet has a neck, trim off a portion of the roots just about equal to the size of the neck (e.g. if the neck is about 1/2" tall, then take about 1/2" off the bottom of the root ball). If you've got a very long neck, then major surgery could be required, in which case you'd have to cut off the entire root ball - but that's a topic for another time. Scrape the flesh of the neck lightly with your fingernail or some other fairly blunt object so that new roots can grow from this area, once it's submerged in fresh soil. Also take this time to check for any signs of pests or disease.

Another easy treat for your violets is a nice, warm bath! Our houses in the winter get very dry and dusty, and if you have pets, you'll have even more dust! Our African violet leaves, which are covered with tiny hairs, are real dust magnets and can get coated with a fine film of dust and dander which impedes the plants "breathing" (remember your high school biology?). Those leaves are covered with tiny pores, or stomata, which are necessary for photosynthesis and transpiration, taking carbon dioxide in and giving off oxygen and water. So clear off that dust and debris and give your African violets a gentle washing. Before you start, cover the soil in the pot with some plastic wrap which will prevent the soil from washing out and down your drain. Fill a dishpan with warm water and add a bit of a mild dish detergent (such as Ivory) to the water. This will act as a wetting agent and help clean the leaves. Swish the upside-down plant around in the water and once the leaves are wet, very gently massage the leaves to break up any dust particles. After that, the leaves can be rinsed under gently running warm water. Before putting wet plants back under the lights (this is especially important for window-grown plants), be sure to let them "dry off" completely. Take care to ensure that the very center of the crown does not stay wet, so use some tissue to blot the water out of the center. Make sure plants are not subject to extremes of temperature as drops of water left on the leaves that then become cold will cause water spotting damage, which is NOT reversible!

Once your plants are re-potted and bathed, and returned to their "home," either under lights or in a window, you should start to see the fruits of your labors in a couple of weeks. New growth should appear that is fresher and greener than the old, and shortly after that, buds will be peeking out from under that new growth! One last tip - if you ARE growing under lights, check to see when you last changed your bulbs; they may be due for replacement.

From *Ye Bay Stater*, publication of the bay State AVS

Soft Rimmed Pots

by Jana K. Strathmann • Indianapolis, IN

Concerned by the marring on my African violets' petioles as they rested on the pot rims, I found an inexpensive solution. I use aquarium airline tubing, split lengthwise and slipped over the rim of the pot. I add a dab of hot glue where the two ends meet to hold them together. On smaller pots, the more flexible blue silicone tubing works best. I call these "soft rimmed pots."

The tubing is sold in most grocery, drug, and discount stores in the pet section. Eight feet of tubing is less than three dollars. In the photo, I used the colored tubing as an example, because the clear tubing didn't show up very well.

Perlite

by Bob Clark

As African violet growers, many of us mix our own potting soil using the basic "Cornell" mixture of 1/3 sphagnum moss, 1/3 vermiculite, and 1/3 perlite, a white, light gritty substance you may find in your soils. These substances are inorganic, or "soilless", meaning they have no organic matter in them such as garden loam or the other organic substances. These items are sterile, and in this ratio give a good basic medium in which to grow our plants.

Perlite is not a trade name, but a generic term for naturally occurring siliceous rock. The distinguishing feature which sets perlite apart from other volcanic glasses is that when heated to a suitable point in its softening range, it expands from four to twenty times its original volume. This expansion is due to the presence of two to six percent combined water in the crude perlite rock. When quickly heated to above 1600°F (871°C), the crude rock pops in a manner similar to popcorn, as the combined water vaporizes and creates countless tiny bubbles which account for the amazing light weight and other exceptional physical properties of expanded perlite.

This expansion process also creates one of perlite's most distinguishing characteristics: its white color. While the crude rock may range from transparent light gray to glossy black, the color of expanded perlite ranges from snowy white to grayish white. Expanded perlite can be manufactured to weigh as little as two pounds per cubic foot, making it adaptable for numerous applications.

There are many uses for perlite which can be broken down into three general categories: construction applications, horticultural applications, and industrial applications. Of course, only the horticultural use applies to us as African violet growers.

In horticultural applications, perlite is used throughout the world as a component of soilless growing mixes, where it provides aeration and optimum moisture retention for superior plant growth. For rooting cuttings, 100% perlite is used. Studies have shown that outstanding yields are achieved with perlite hydroponic systems. Other benefits of horticultural perlite are its neutral pH and the fact that it is sterile and weed-free. In addition, its light weight makes it ideal for use in container growing. Other horticultural applications for perlite are as a carrier for fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides, as well as for pelletizing seed. Horticultural perlite is as useful to the home gardener as it is to the commercial grower. It is used with equal success in greenhouse growing, landscape applications, and in the home in house plants.

From *Ye Bay Stater*, publication of the Bay State AVS

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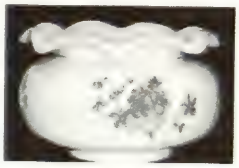

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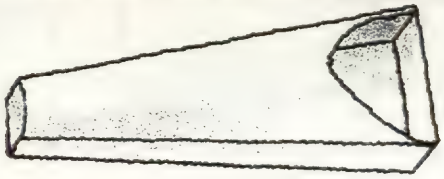

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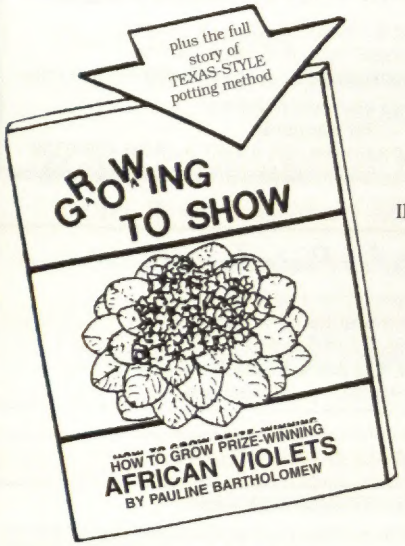
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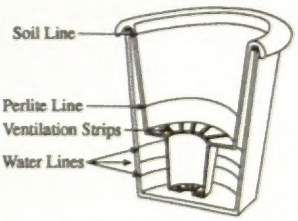

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